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15. Kiku's Tragedy

Chapter 1: A Tragedy And The Awakening Of Love.....005

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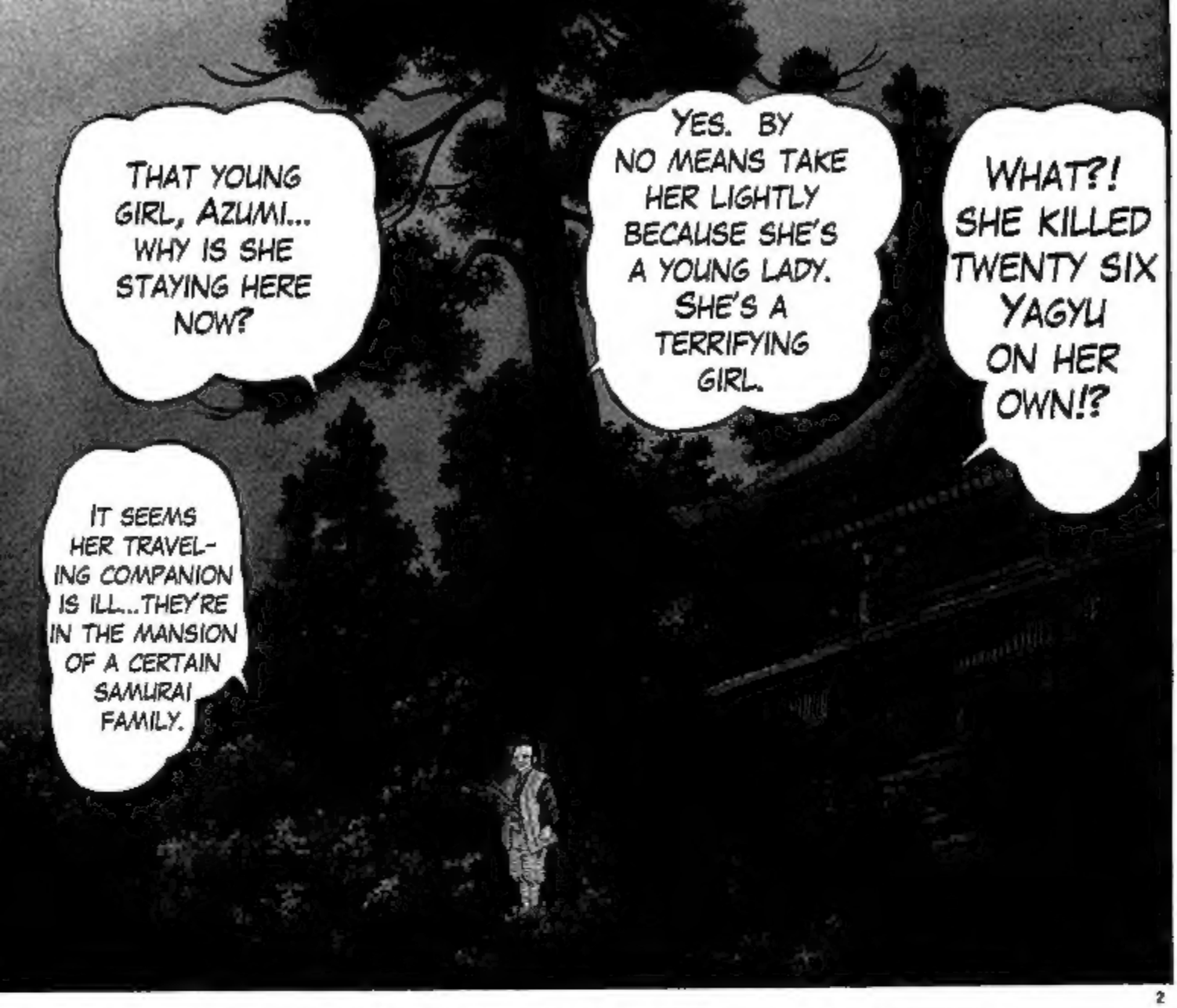
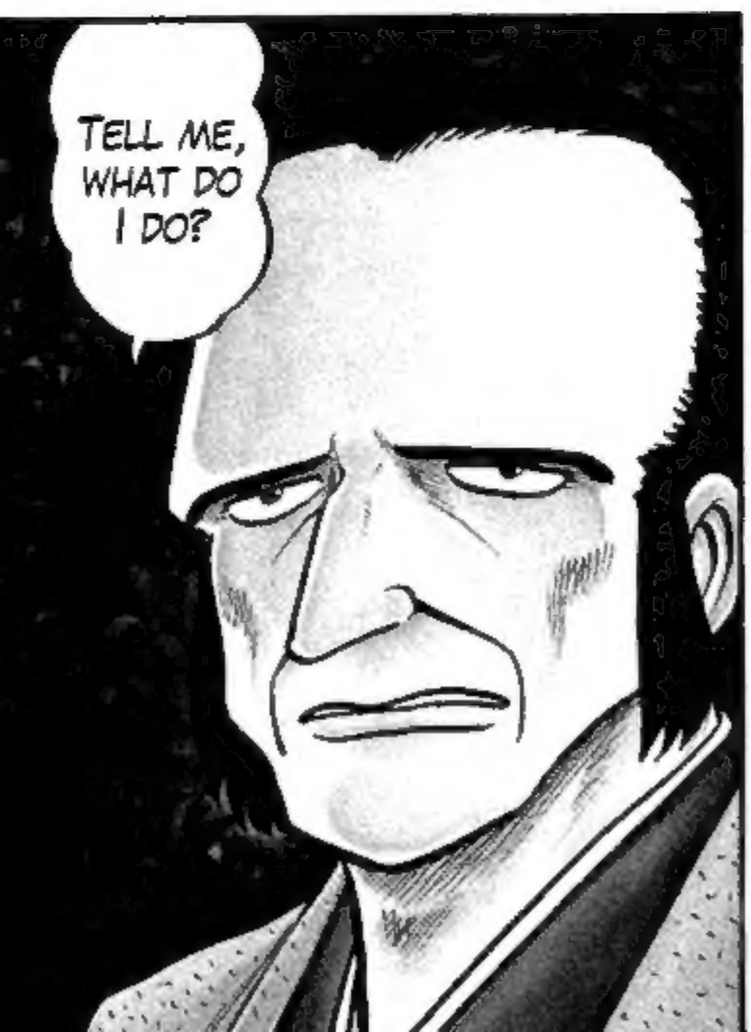
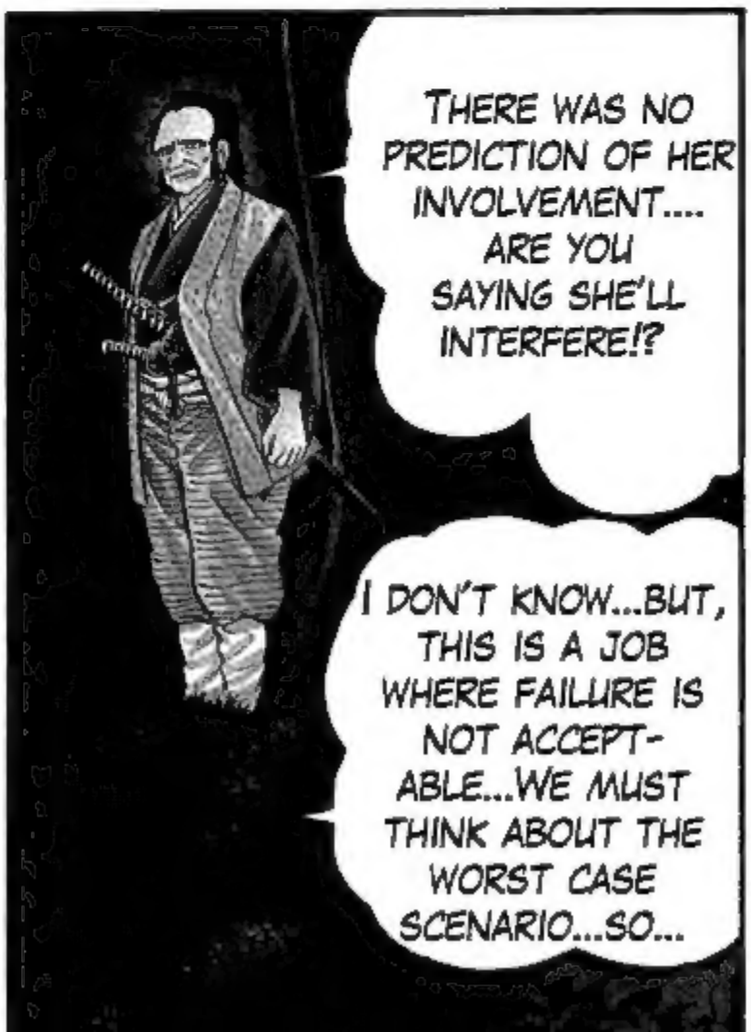
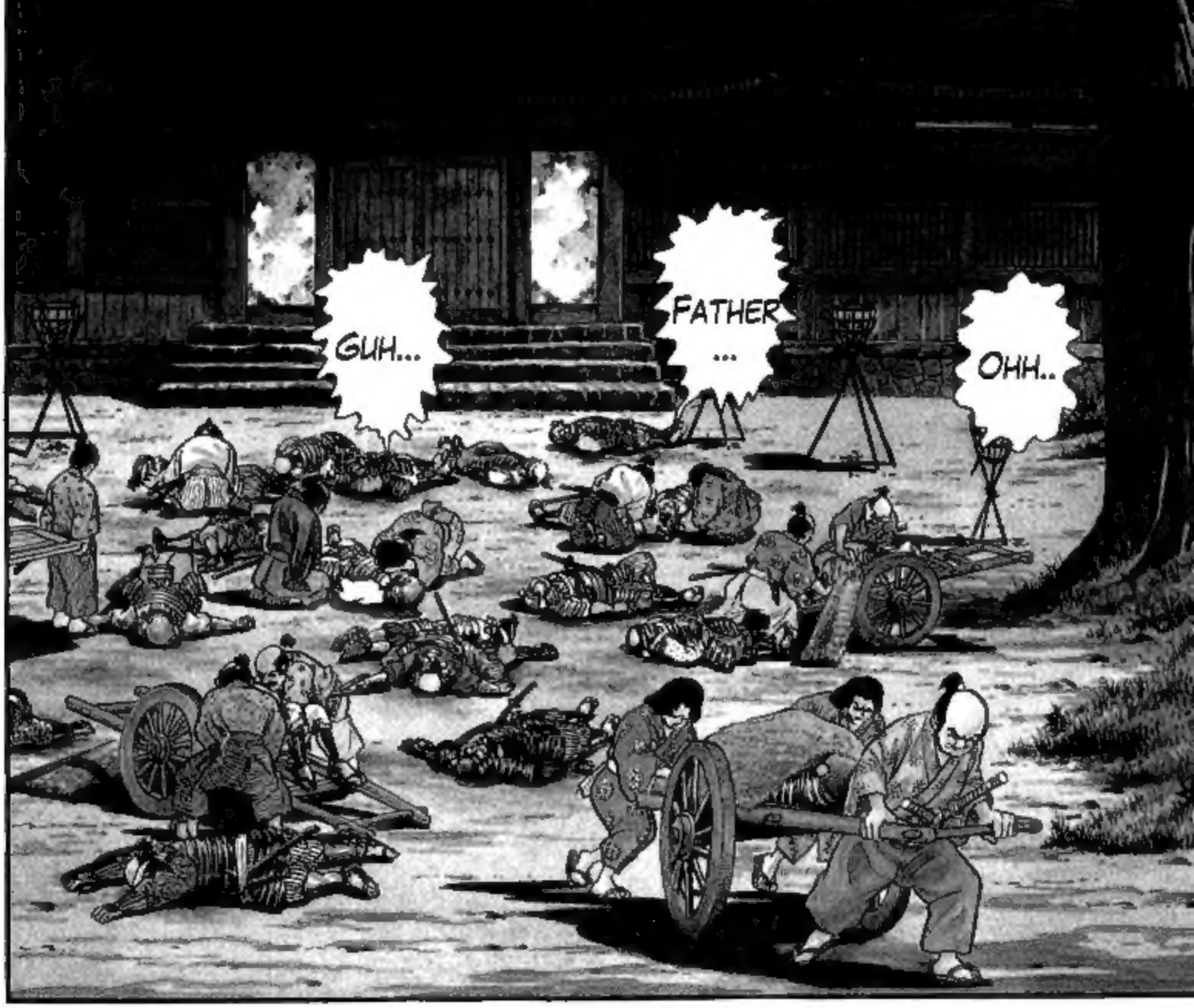
CHAPTER 1: A TRAGEDY AND THE AWAKENING OF LOVE


THAT YOUNG GIRL, AZUMI... WHY IS SHE STAYING HERE NOW?
IT SEEMS HER TRAVEL-ING COMPANION IS ILL...THEY'RE IN THE MANSION OF A CERTAIN SAMURAI FAMILY.
YES. BY NO MEANS TAKE HER LIGHTLY BECAUSE SHE'S A YOUNG LADY. SHE'S A TERRIFYING GIRL.
WHAT?! SHE KILLED TWENTY SIX YAGYU ON HER OWN!?


TELL ME, WHAT DO I DO?


THERE WAS NO PREDICTION OF HER INVOLVEMENT.... ARE YOU SAYING SHE'LL INTERFERE!?
I DON'T KNOW...BUT, THIS IS A JOB WHERE FAILURE IS NOT ACCEPT-ABLE...WE MUST THINK ABOUT THE WORST CASE SCENARIO...SO...



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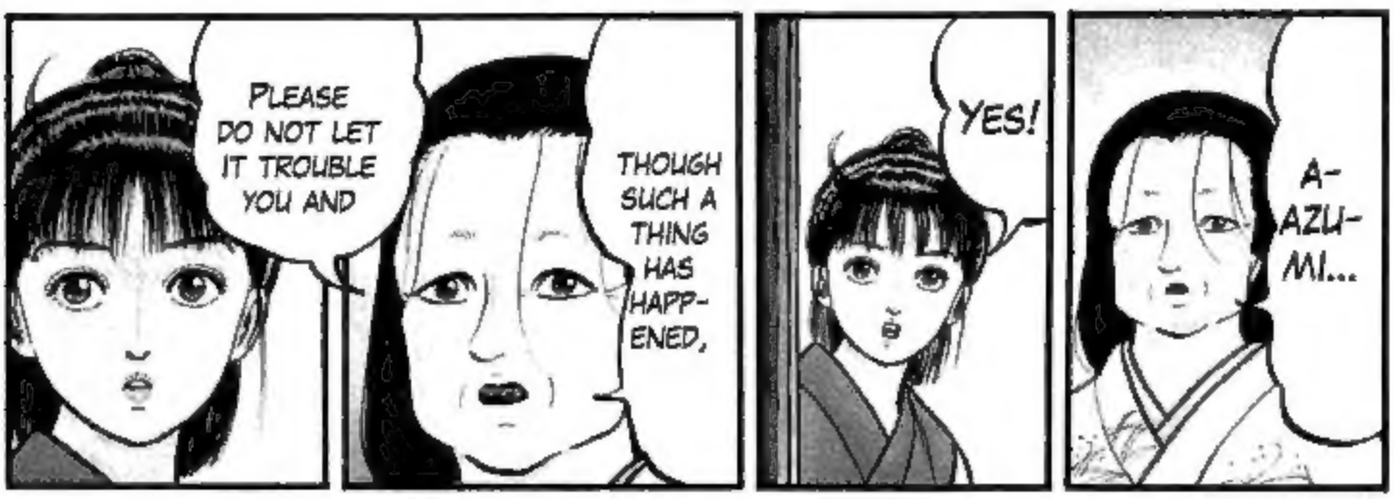

PLEASE DO NOT LET IT TROUBLE YOU AND
THOUGH SUCH A THING HAS HAPP-ENED,
YES!
A-AZU-MI...

……
AFTER THAT , I'LL HAVE KENNOSUKE TAKE YOU TO AN ABSOLUTELY SAFE PLACE.
REMAIN HERE UNTIL KIKU IS COMPLETED RECOVERED.

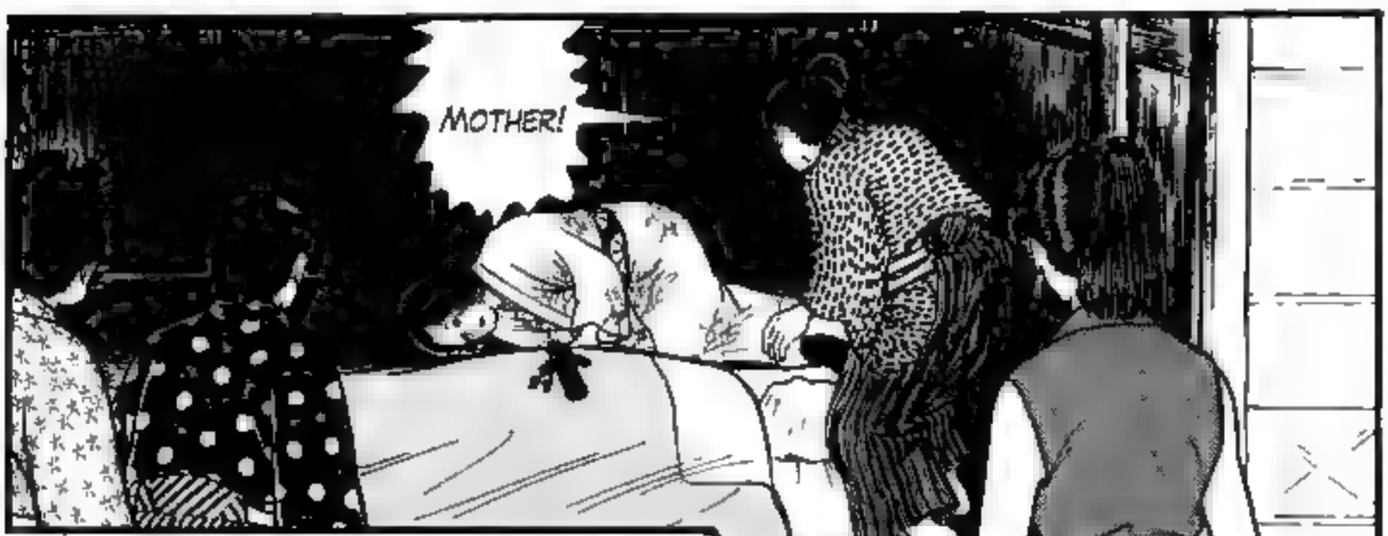
KEN-
NOSUKE
...
KEN-
NOSUKE!
YES...
THANK YOU
SO MUCH...
THOUGH...HER
HUSBAND WAS
KILLED...AT A TIME
LIKE THIS, SHE
THINKS ABOUT US...

IT IS TIMES
SUCH AS THIS
THAT YOU MUST
COMPOSE
YOURSELF!
YES!

KEN-
NOSUKE!
YOU...
MUST...
NOT...
.....

YOU MUSTN'T!
YOU MUST NOT DIE!
YOU MUST NOT DO ANYTHING HASTY!

YOU...

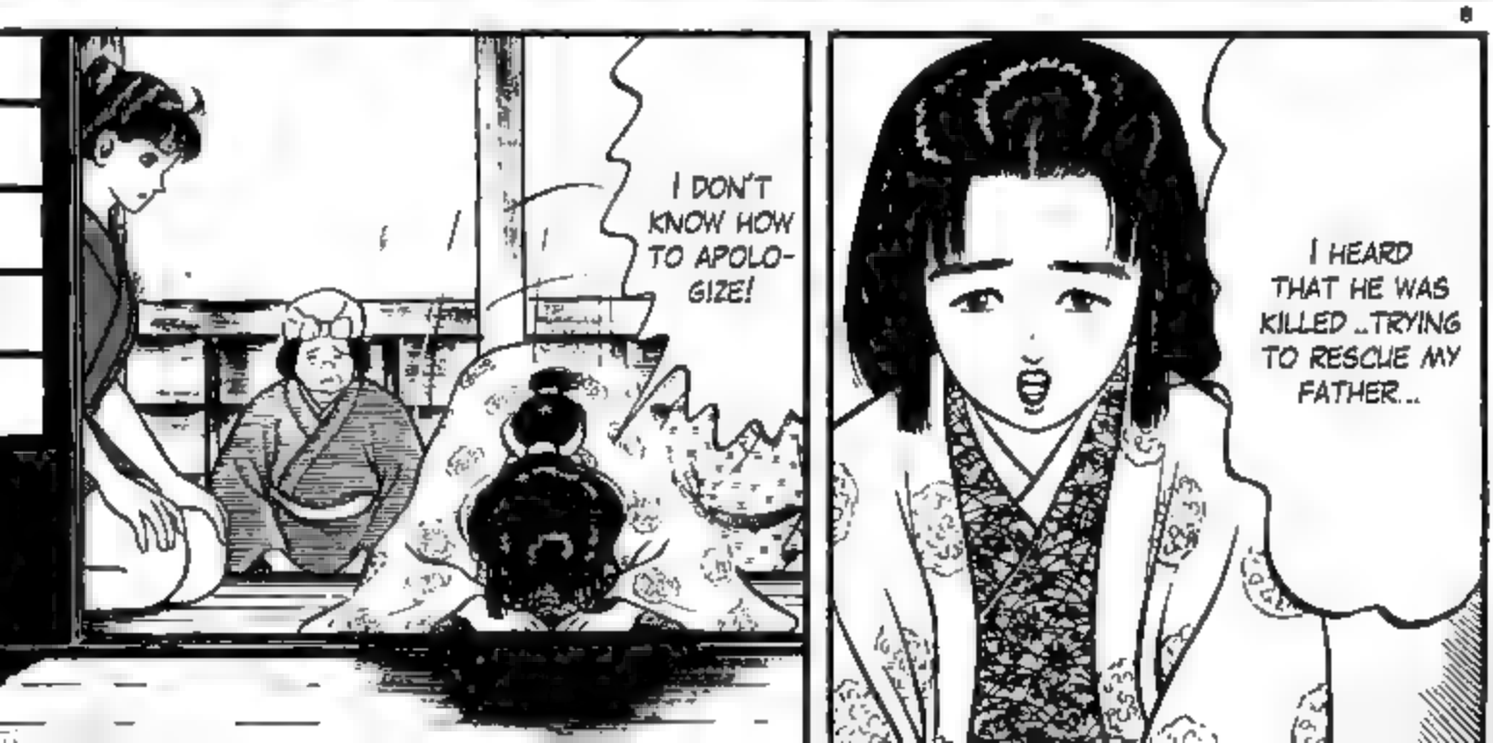

MOTHER!

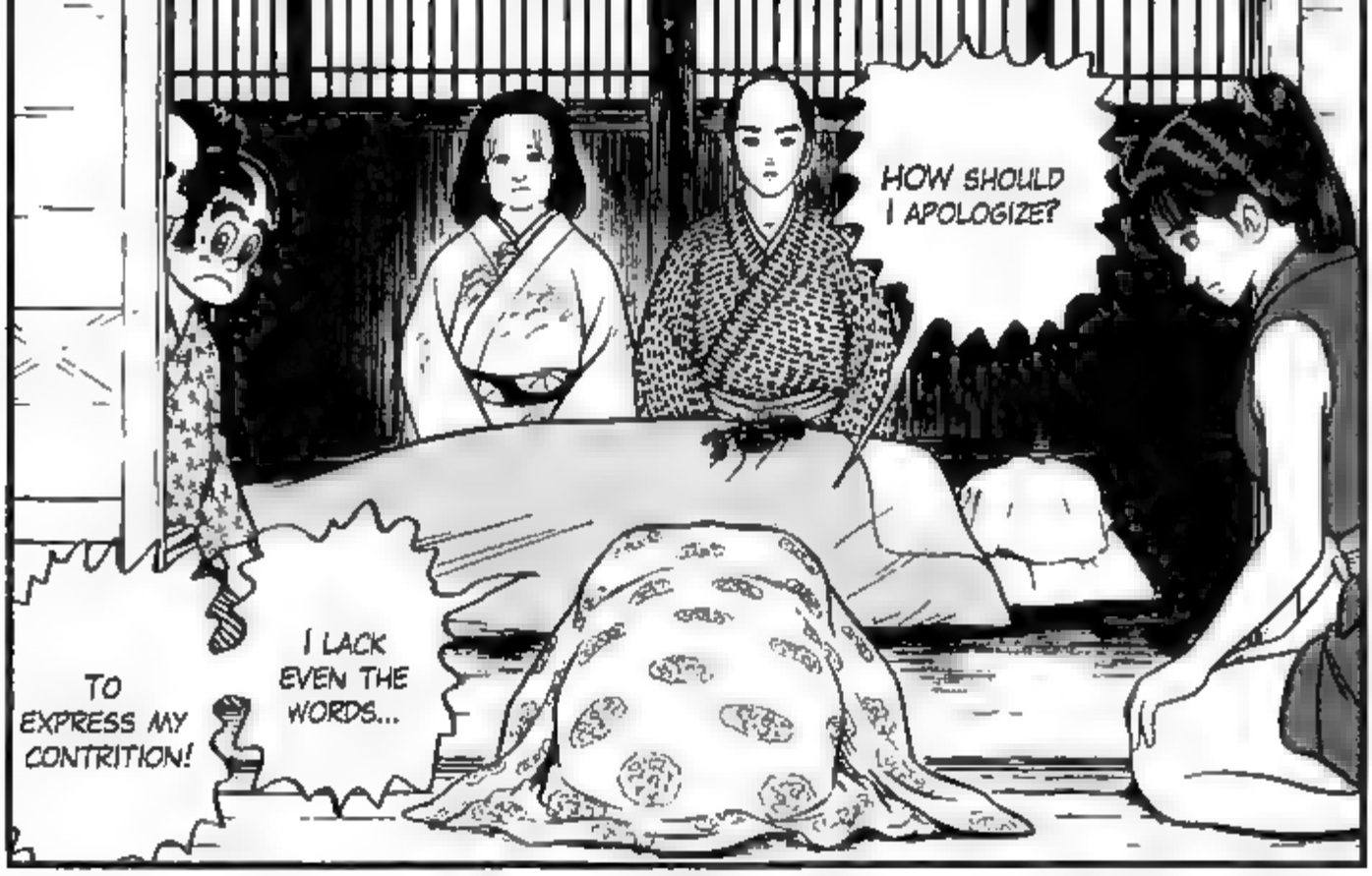
I'M ALL RIGHT.
I AM... FINE...

EXCUSE ME, LORD KEN-NOSUKE.

SHINO-DONO!
SHINO-DONO!
SHINO-DONO HAS!

LADY SHINO HAS COME TO VISIT

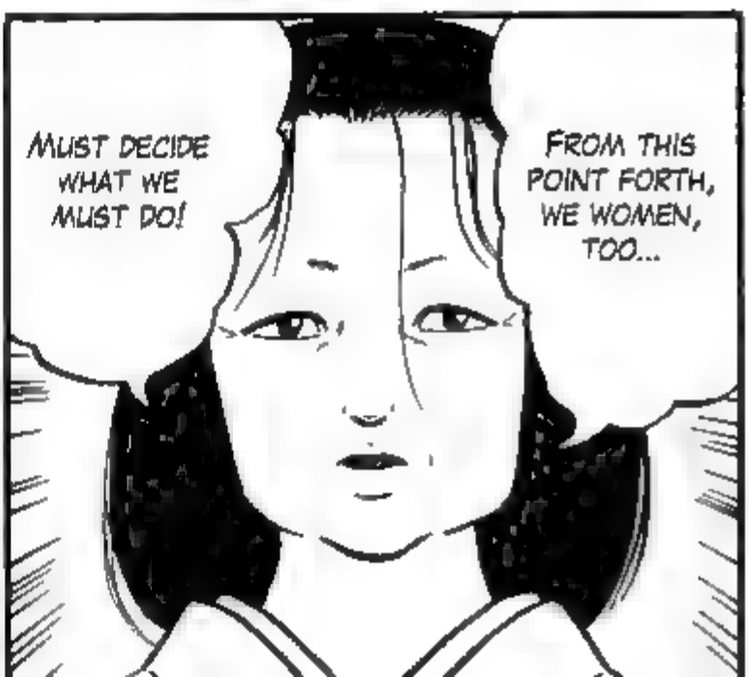

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO APOLO-GIZE!
I HEARD THAT HE WAS KILLED ..TRYING TO RESCUE MY FATHER...

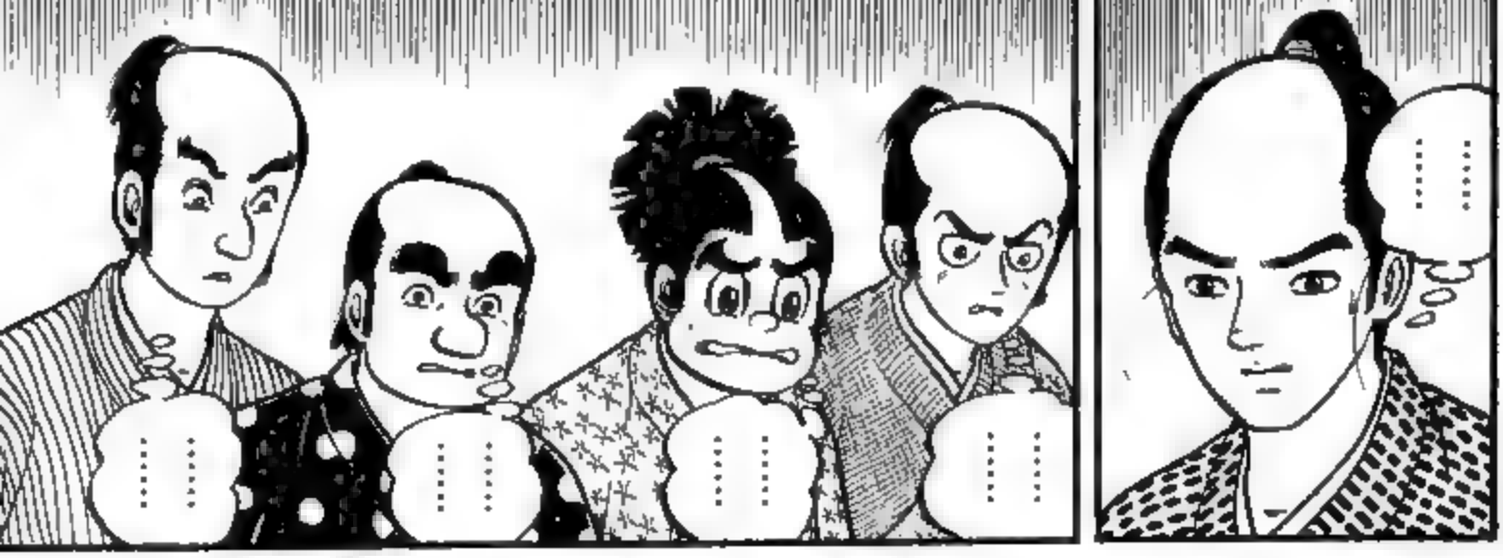

HOW SHOULD I APOLOGIZE?
I LACK EVEN THE WORDS...
TO EXPRESS MY CONTRITION!

PLEASE DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELF.
IT IS FINE.
ERGO...
MORE IMPORT-ANTLY,

I THINK THAT MY HUSBAND ACTED AFTER HE THOUGHT THROUGH WHAT HE SHOULD HAVE DONE AS A SAMURAI, AS A RETAINER OF THIS DOMAIN.
SHINO-DONO...

YES...
.....


MUST DECIDE WHAT WE MUST DO!
FROM THIS POINT FORTH, WE WOMEN, TOO...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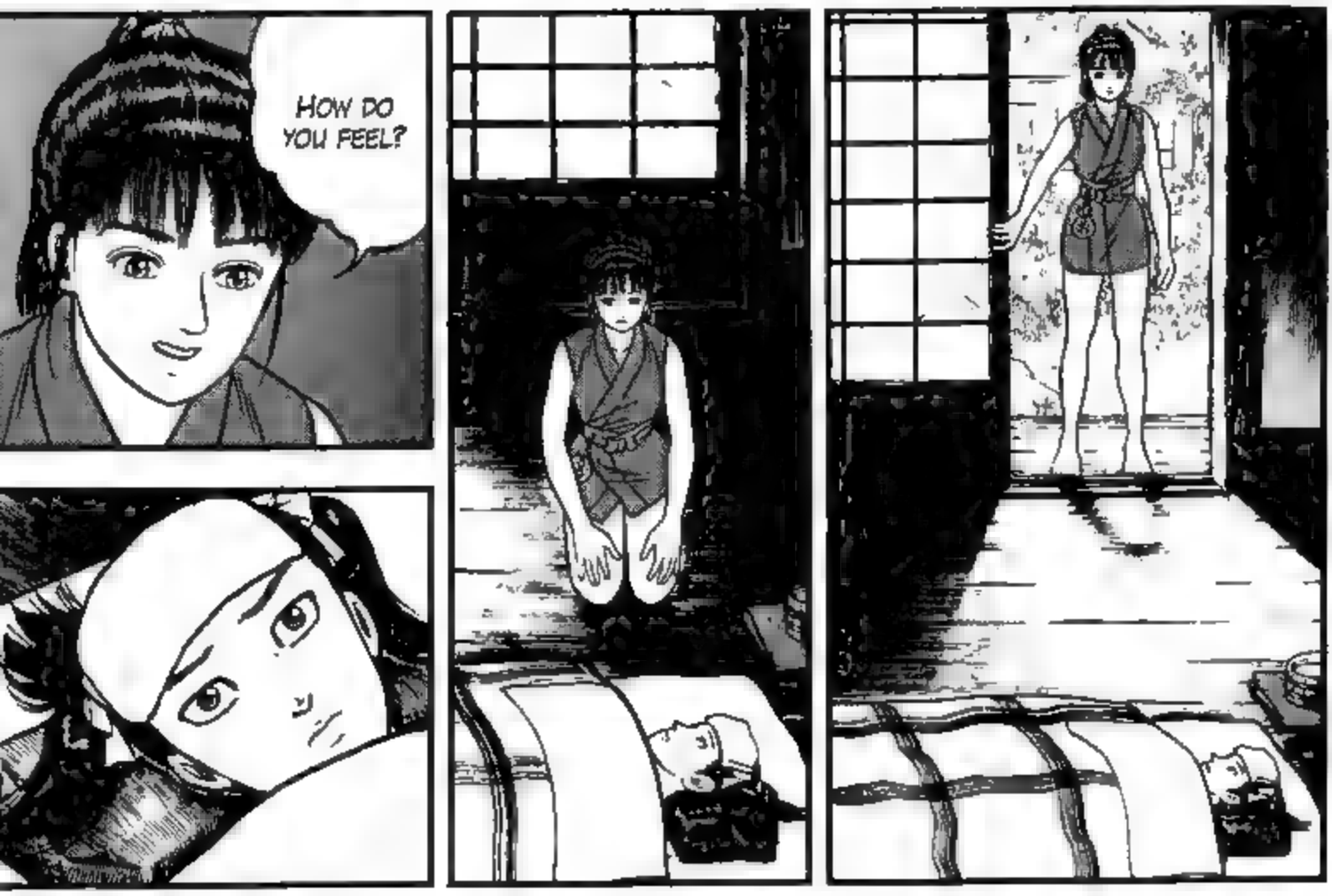
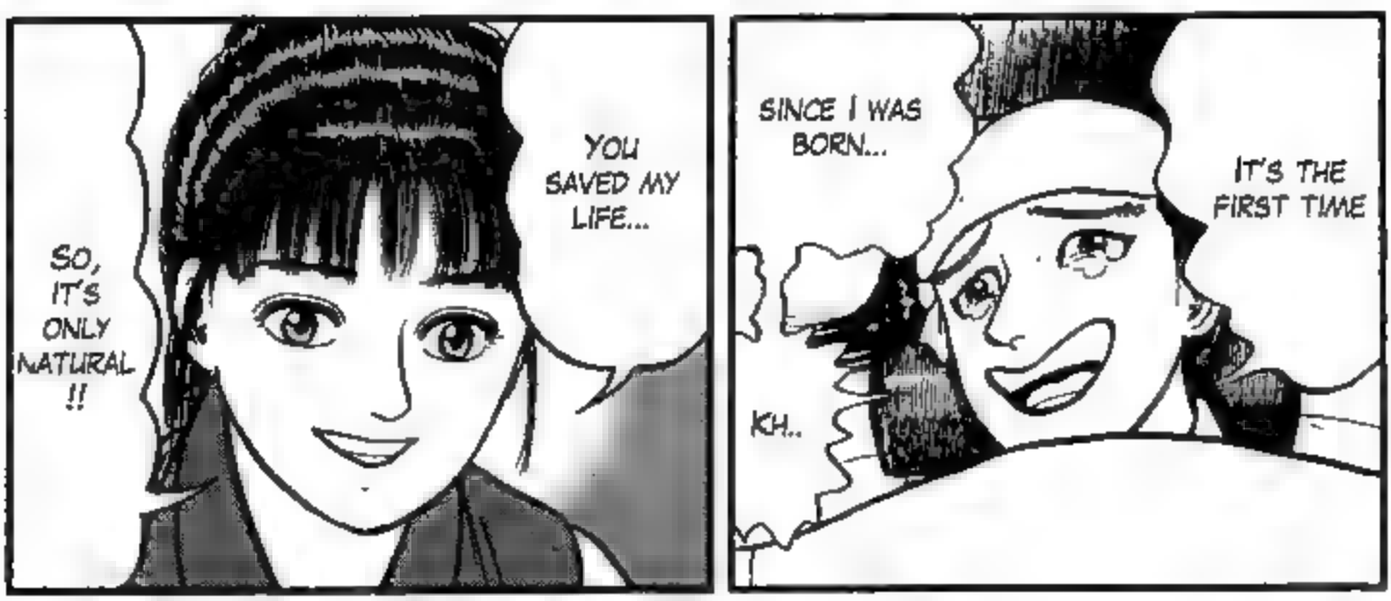

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

……
WHEN I SLEEP, I HAVE SO MANY BAD DREAMS...
YES...
THE FEVER HAS GONE DOWN...

I'M SORRY. I CAN'T ENTER YOUR DREAMS TO SAVE YOU THERE.
THEY JUST KEEP COMING... DAMMIT..

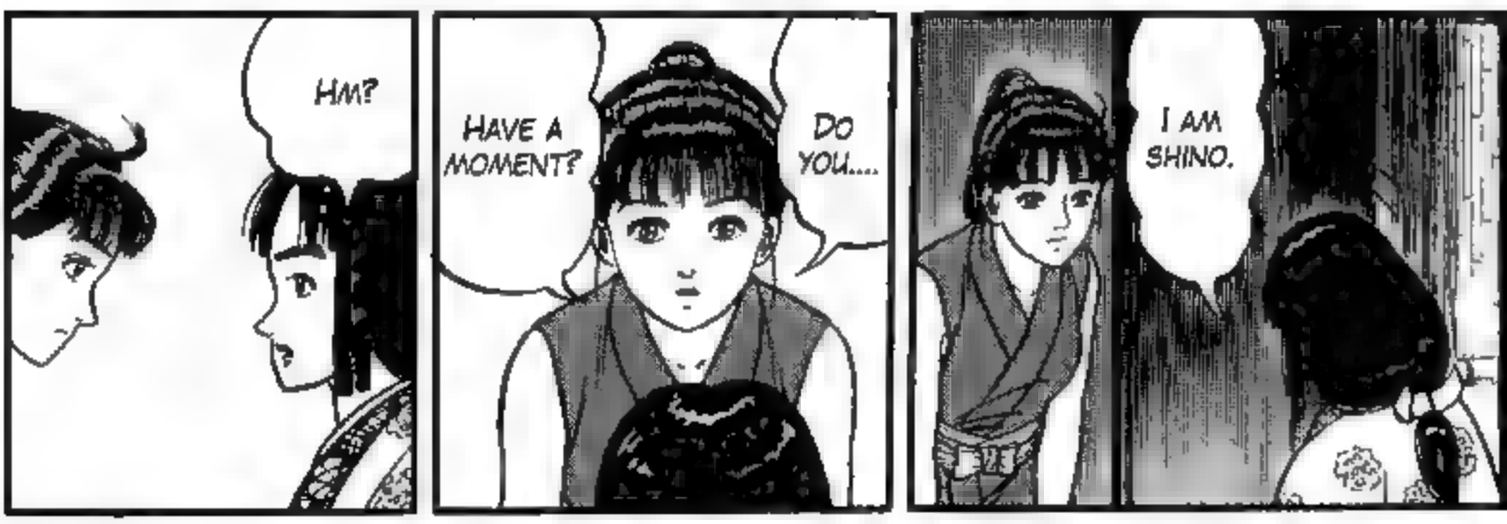
WHY ARE YOU SO KIND...AZUMI?
HEE HEE...

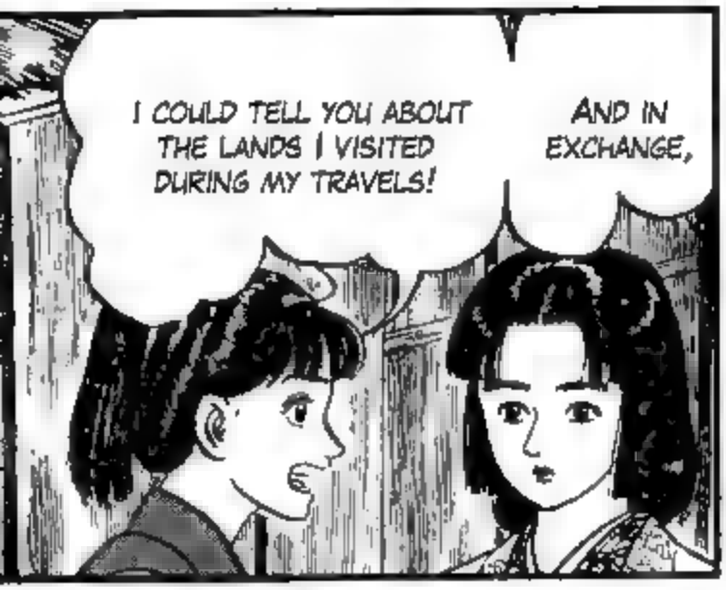

SO, IT'S ONLY NATURAL !!
YOU SAVED MY LIFE...
SINCE I WAS BORN...
IT'S THE FIRST TIME
KH..

I'M YOUR...
SAVED...

AT THAT TIME, IF YOU HADN'T SUCKED OUT THE POISON FROM ME, I WOULD'VE DIED
WE'LL ESCORT YOU HOME.
NO, I HAVE MY GUARDS WITH ME. MORE IMPORTANTLY, STAY NEAR TO KENNOSUKE-DONO.
SO FROM NOW ON, I'M ALWAYS GOING TO PROTECT YOU!
12
IM SO HAPPY!
.....
UUU

OH, I SEE.
MY TRAVELING COMPANION CAME DOWN WITH A FEVER AND I'M TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THESE PEOPLE'S KINDNESS TO REST HERE.
MY NAME IS AZUMI. I'M A TRAVELER.
AND YOU ARE...?


HM?
HAVE A MOMENT?
DO YOU....
I AM SHINO.

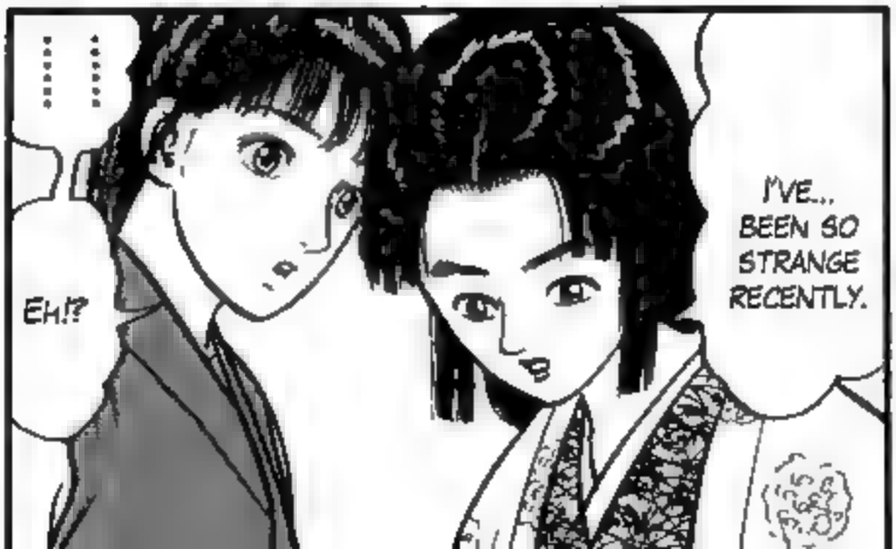

I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THE LANDS I VISITED DURING MY TRAVELS!
AND IN EXCHANGE,

JUST WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE?
IF...IT IS POSSIBLE.. CAN YOU TELL ME.. IN DETAIL

GHH!
WE CAN'T...DO A SINGLE THING MORE!

...AND THAT'S IT.
SO...
IF THOSE RONIN WERE TO STEAL THE SHOG-UNATE GOLD..
THEN THIS DOMAIN WILL LIKELY BE DESTROYED.
THAT'S...
SO TERRIBLE.

YES...
AH...
IT'S A SECRET!


.....
EH!?
I'VE... BEEN SO STRANGE RECENTLY.

I GOT SO EXCITED!
WHEN I WAS READY TO GIVE IN...
ALL OF A SUDDEN,
.....
SCARED TO DEATH... I'VE BEEN IN A STATE WHERE I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING.
MY FATHER IS IMPRISONED AND COULD BE KILLED. MY HOME COULD VANISH FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
BUT...

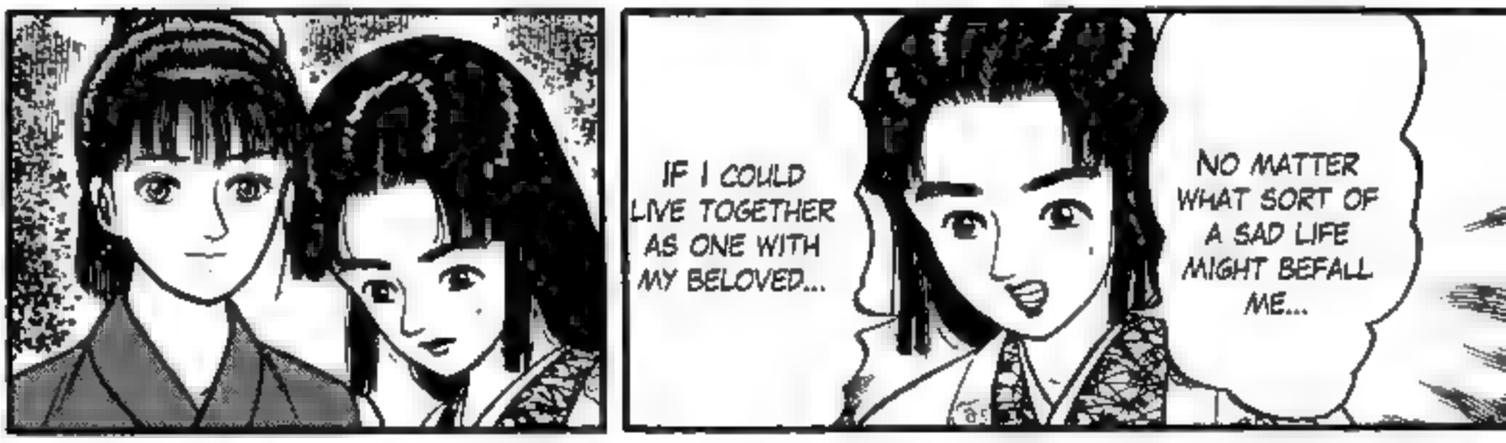
Y-YES... MILADY.
YOU MUSTN'T COME CLOSER!
TAKEMOTO! YOU'RE HERE, RIGHT?
EXCITED!? WHY IS THAT?
.....
.....

KENNO-SUKE-DONO!
EEEK!
SINCE I WAS BUT A CHILD... I HAVE.. ALWAYS... SECRETLY LOVED...
AND I...BELIEVE KENNOSUKE-DONO LOVES ME AS WELL!
N-NO WAY! IT WOULD BE TOO... EMBARRASSING!
HAVEN'T YOU CONF-ESSED TO ONE ANOTHER?
IT CANNOT BE HELPED.
BUT IT SEEMS HE IS TRYING TO GET ME TO GIVE UP ON IT...THINKING HE IS UNSUITABLE...

IF I EVER SAID THAT I WANT TO BE TOGETHER WITH KENNOSUKE-DONO, MY FATHER AND MOTHER WOULDN'T ALLOW IT...
THEY HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN A SUITABLE MATCH FOR ME...
IS THAT HOW THINGS WORK?
RIGHT
IT'S THE FATE OF A SAMURAI'S DAUGHTER.

FOR THAT REASON, I ALSO...IN THE END, WAS GOING TO GIVE UP ON KENNOSUKE-DONO...- BECOME THE WIFE OF SOMEONE DECIDED BY MY FATHER...
LIVE QUIETLY IN THIS LAND, GIVE BIRTH TO BABIES AND GROW OLD. I WAS THINKING OF LIVING A LIFE SUCH AS THAT.
BUT....
I NEVER DREAMED THAT A SITUATION LIKE THIS COULD COME TO PASS!

IF MY LANDS WERE TO VANISH, I WOULDN'T BE 'SUITABLE' ANYMORE!
RIGHT!?


IF I COULD LIVE TOGETHER AS ONE WITH MY BELOVED...
NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF A SAD LIFE MIGHT BEFALL ME...

.....

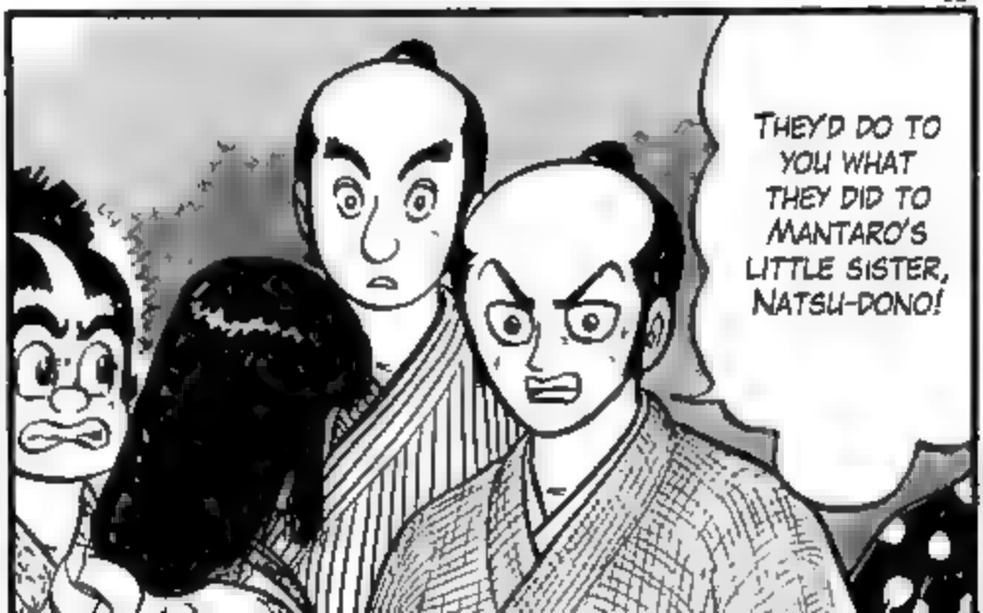
STRANGE, NO!?
I CAN'T HELP BUT FEELING A BIT HOPEFUL!
THAT IS WHY... EVEN WHEN EVERYONE IS DESPAIRING...

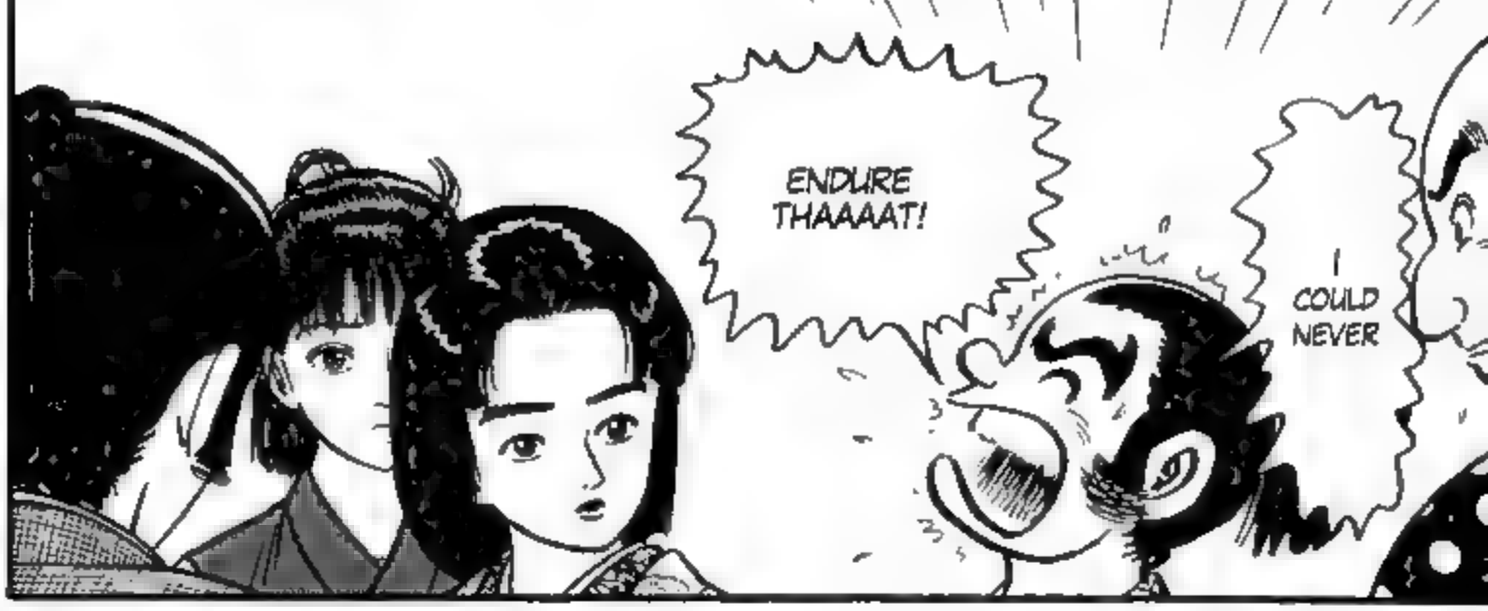
.....
.....

AND WHERE AZUMI-SAN ALSO WENT!
SO THERE YOU ARE, SHINO-DONO!
AH!

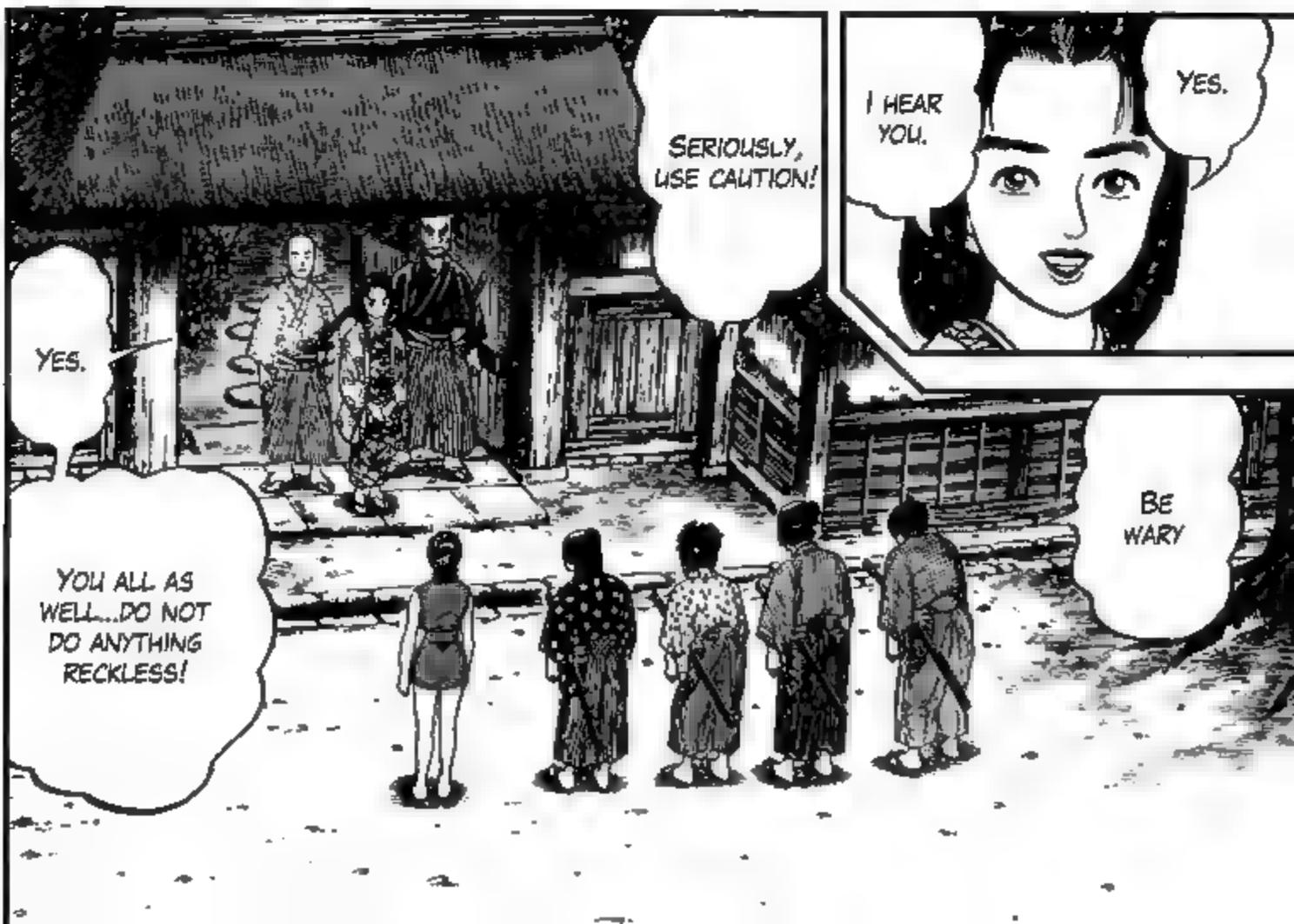
IT'D BE TERIBLE IF SHINO-DONO CAUGHT THEIR ATTENTION!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS WALKING OUTSIDE!
RIGHT!
YOU SHOULD THINK OF THOSE MEN GETTING ARROGANT AND EVEN SETTING FOOT IN THESE PARTS!

AAAAH! NOO!


THEY'D DO TO YOU WHAT THEY DID TO MANTARO'S LITTLE SISTER, NATSU-DONO!


ENDURE THAAAAT!
I COULD NEVER

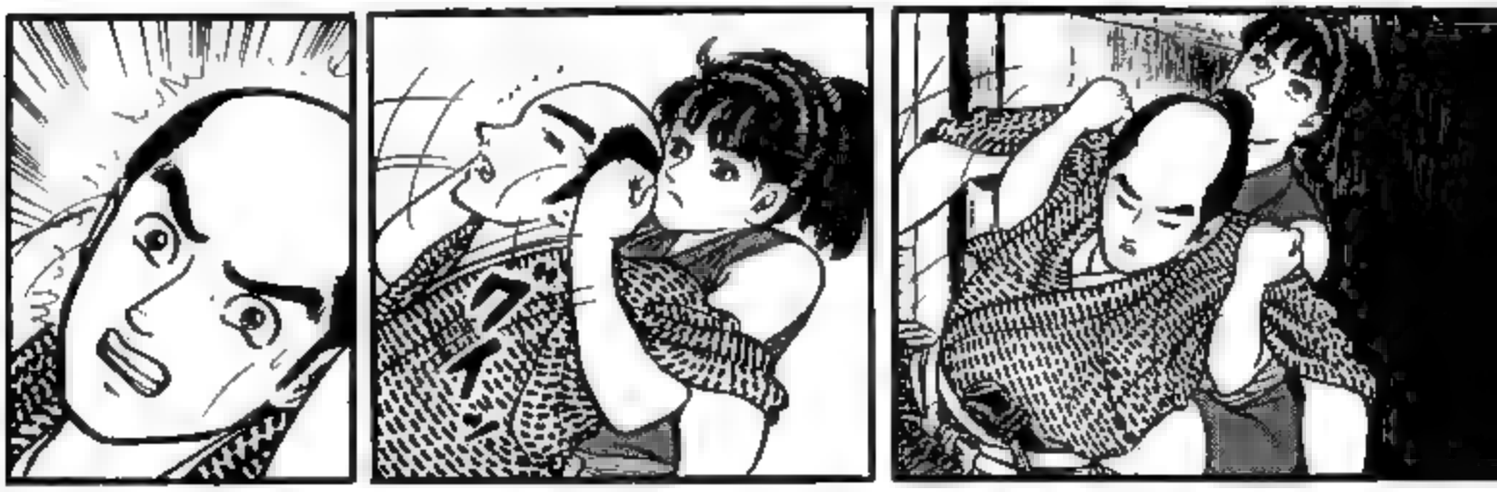
AND YOU, AZUMI-SAN!
PLEASE REFRAIN FROM WALKING OUTSIDE, I BEG YOU!
I IMPLORE YOU...USE CAUTION!


SERIOUSLY, USE CAUTION!
I HEAR YOU.
YES.
YES.
YOU ALL AS WELL...DO NOT DO ANYTHING RECKLESS!
BE WARY

!!
OHH!
AH!

WHAT HAPPENED!?
HANG ON!!!

AAAAH, K-KEN-NOSUKE!

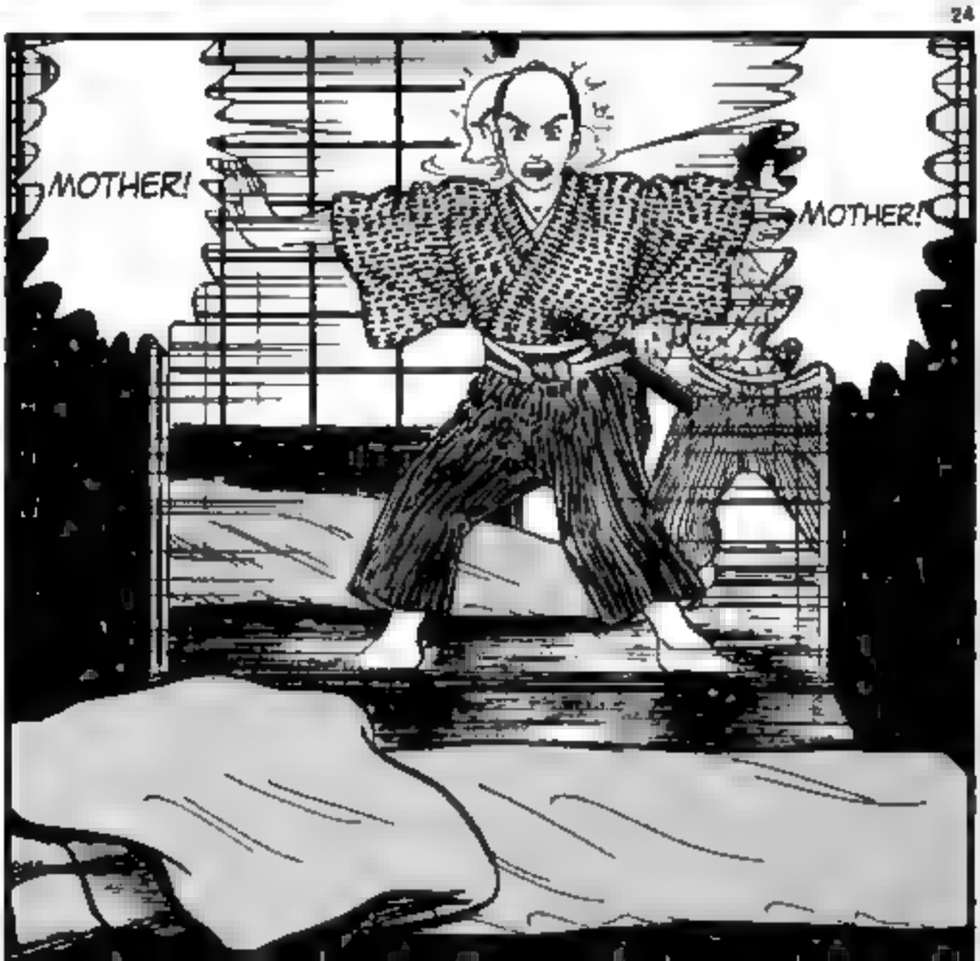

ドク

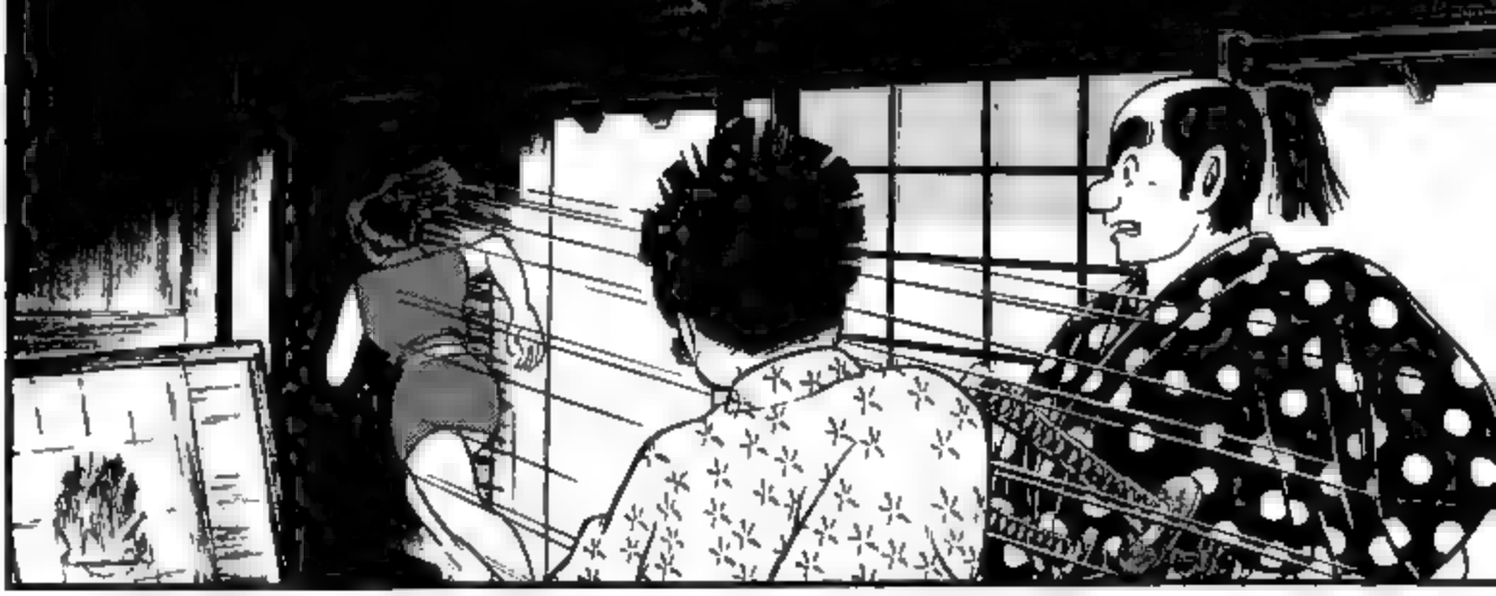
KENNOSUKE! WHAT'S WRONG?! WHAT HAPPENED!?

FIVE OR SIX!
S-SHINOBI! MASKED SHINOBI CAME SUDDENLY RUSHING IN!
SHINOBI!?
BUT WHY HERE?!

AHH!

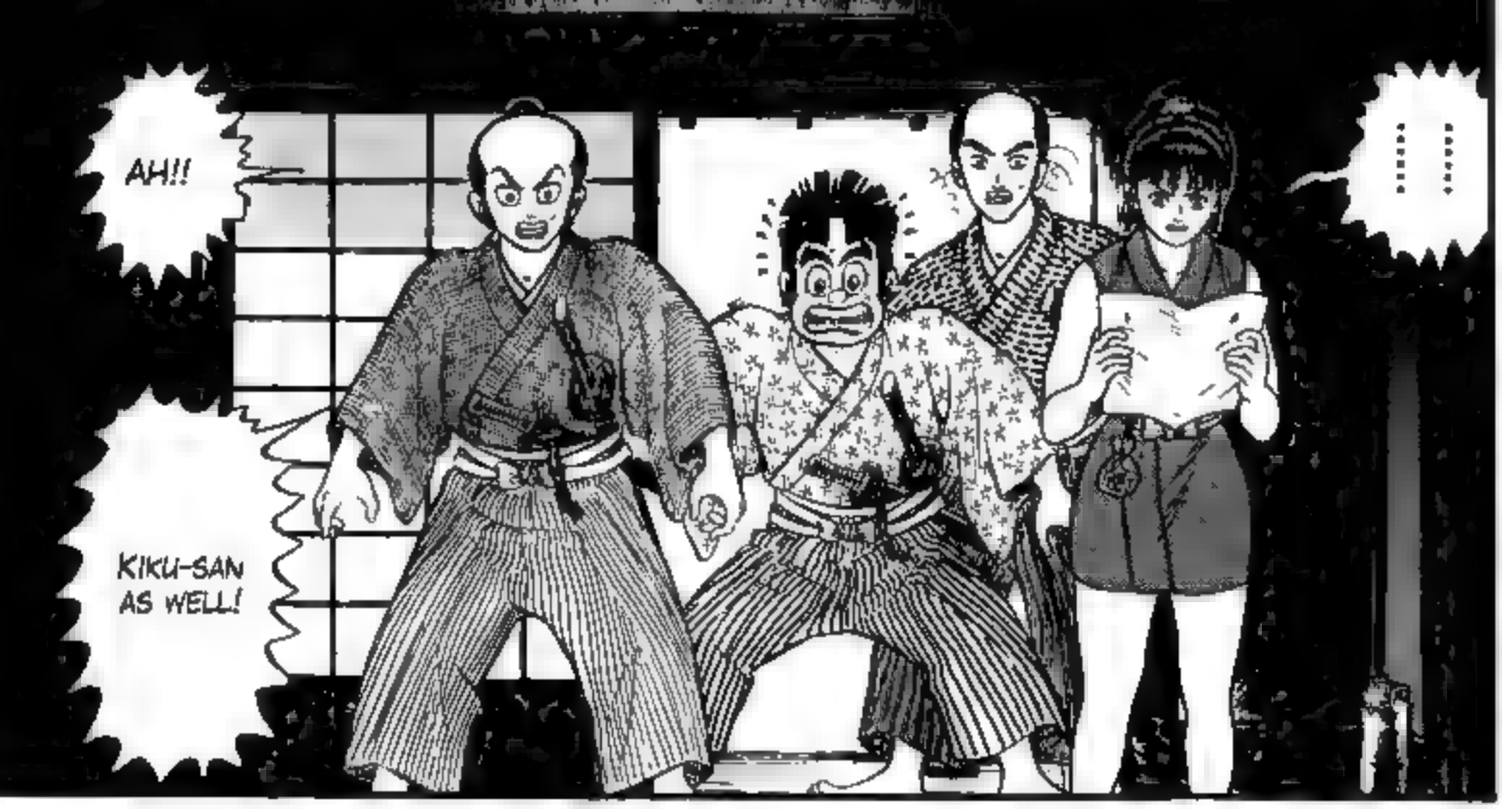
!!


MOTHER!
MOTHER!

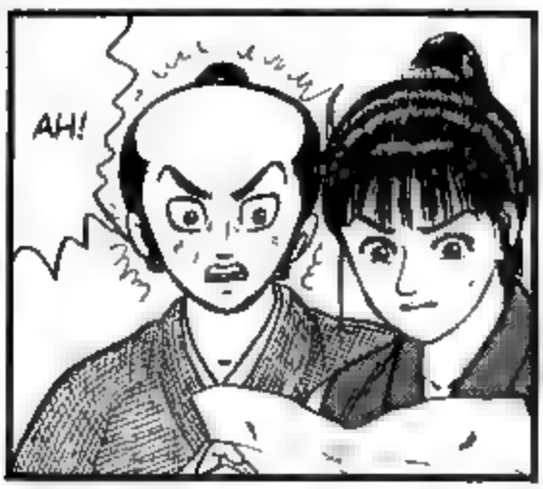


KIKU!!!!

!!


AH!!
KIKU-SAN AS WELL!
.....

WHAT DOES IT SAY!?
.....


AH!

.....
WHAT?! ASSASS-INATION!?
OUR GOAL IS NOT THE ASSASSINATION OF A YOUNG GIRL LIKE YOU...
THESE TWO WOMEN ARE IN OUR HANDS.
"TO AZUMI,
...BUT SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT!"

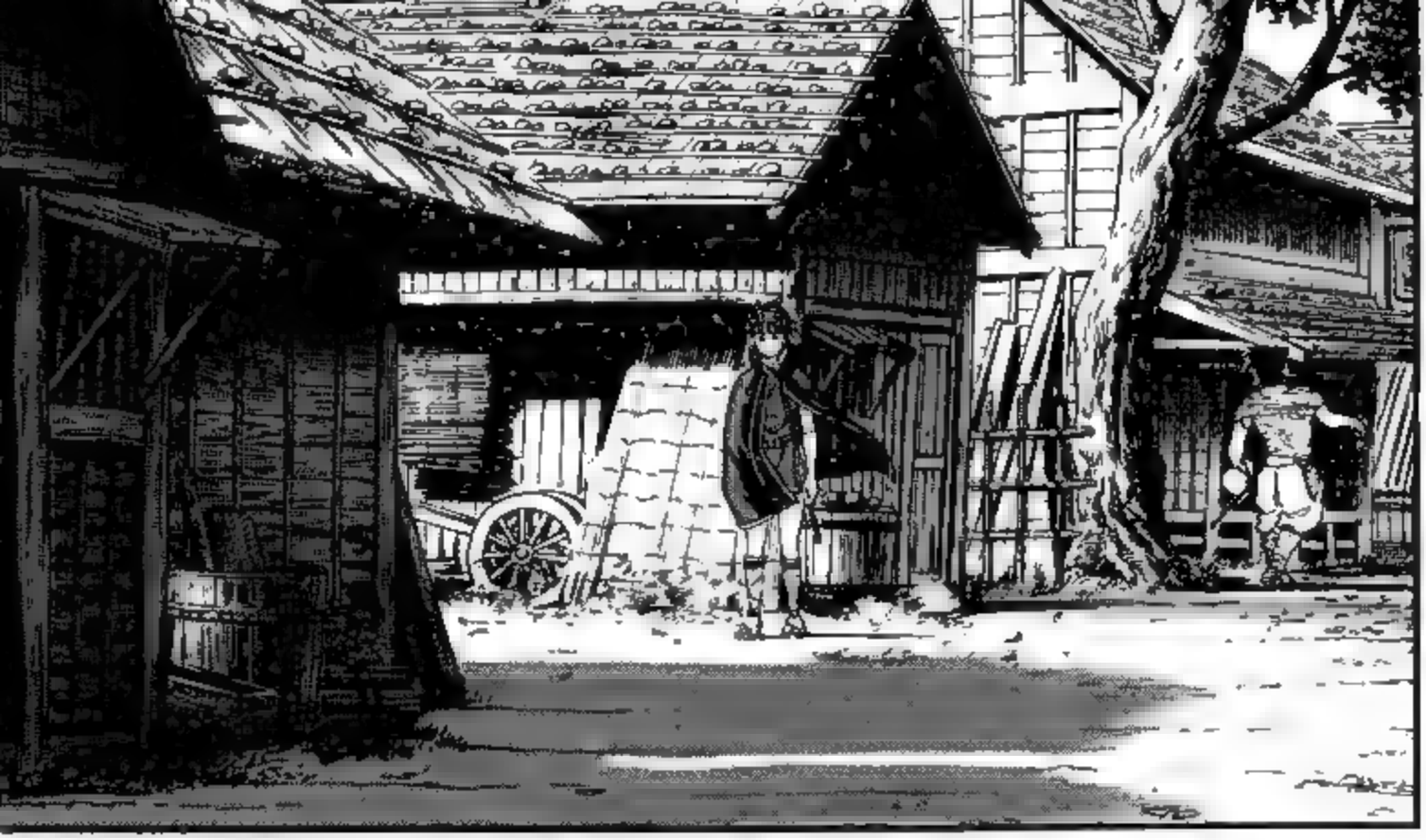
IF YOU WISH FOR THEM TO REMAIN SAFE
FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS,
DO NOT HINDER US AND REMAIN WITHIN YOUR FRIENDS' HOUSE AS A QUIET BYSTANDER.
THEIR LIVES...
DEPEND ON THIS.

JUST WHO ARE YOU!?
AZUMI-SAN...
WHAT IS THIS!?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?

OKO-SAN!
KIKU!!!
ONCE AGAIN, I'VE ENDED UP INVOLVING KIND AND INNOCENT PEOPLE!
KIKUUUUUU!!!!!

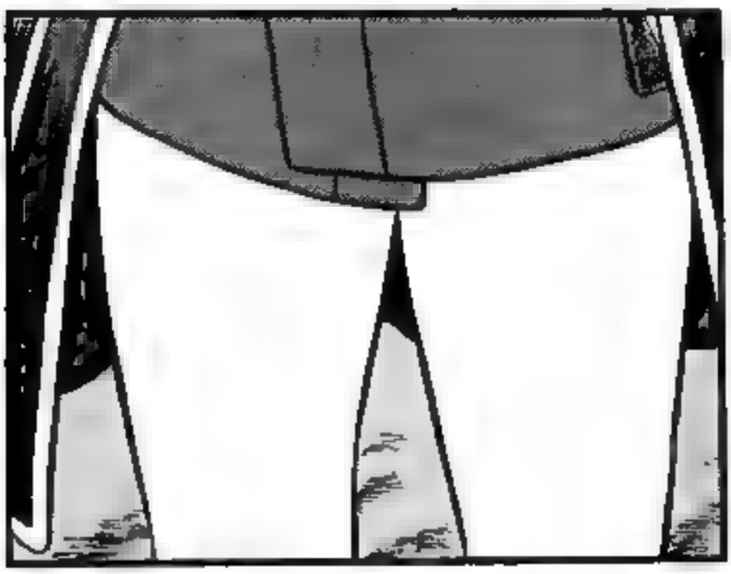
OHH!

HEY! LOOK!



NICE GAL...
OHHH!
SHE'S DRESSED FUNNY..
IT'S A WOMAN!

WHAT IS IT, SIS, YOU ON YOUR OWN?
WHY YOU GOT A KATANA?



FIRST CLASS.
THOSE ARE...

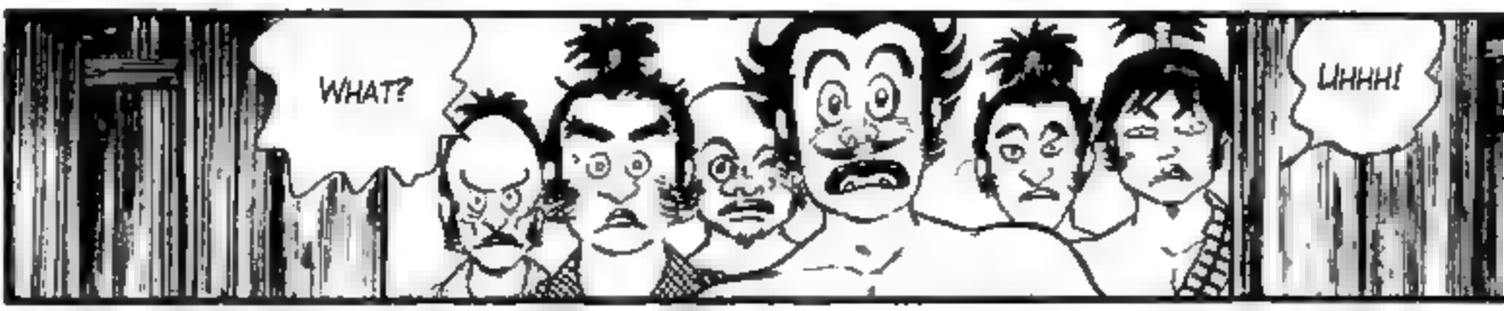
EHEHE..

BISHAMONTEN? PLEASE TELL ME NOW.
IN WHICH HOUSE IS...

IS SHE SIR BISHAMONTEN'S DAUGHTER? OR MAYBE HIS WOMAN..?
A FRIEND OF HIS?
WHA...

WHAT'S WRONG? WHO'S THIS WOMAN?
IS HE HERE?

BISHAMONTEN! OR THE SHINOBI WHO TOOK THOSE TWO PEOPLE!
I WISH TO TALK!
I AM AZUMI!


WHAT?
UHHH!

COULD THAT REALLY BE AZUMI?
WHO THE HELL'S THAT LITTLE GIRL?

YOU SAID YOU'RE AZUMI?
YES!
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

ARE YOU THE MAN CALLED BISHAMONTEN?

HUH, A WRITTEN MESSAGE?
TWO PEOPLE!? WHO!?

WEREN'T YOU THE ONE WHO LEFT THAT WRITTEN MESSAGE WHEN YOU KIDNAPPED THOSE TWO PEOPLE?
WHAT DO I WANT?

WAS I MISTAKEN?
.....

AAAAH!
IT IS TRUE THAT WE HAVE THOSE TWO WOMEN!
AZUMI!

I WILL EXPLAIN LATER.

!!
...

WHAT IS YOUR REPLY?
WELL?

SO DON'T DO A THING TO THOSE TWO!
I PROMISE THAT I WILL REMAIN IN THAT HOUSE AS A MERE BYSTANDER!
ONE OF THEM IS SICK WITH A FEVER!
SO TREAT HER WELL!

WHAT?!
HAHAH!
HAHAHA!

IF SOME CRUELTY SHOULD BEFALL THEM.. NO...IF YOU DO EVEN THE SLIGHTEST OF HARM TO EITHER OF THEM
THEN I SHALL NOT FORGIVE YOU!

SO CUUUUTE!
OHOOO!

IS SHE INSANE!?
GETTING SO FULL OF YOURSELF WITH US!
THE HELL YA SAYING, YOU DAMN GIRL!
C-CAN'T WE JUST FUCK HER!?
DON'T TOUCH HER! DO NOT EVEN GET CLOSE TO HER!

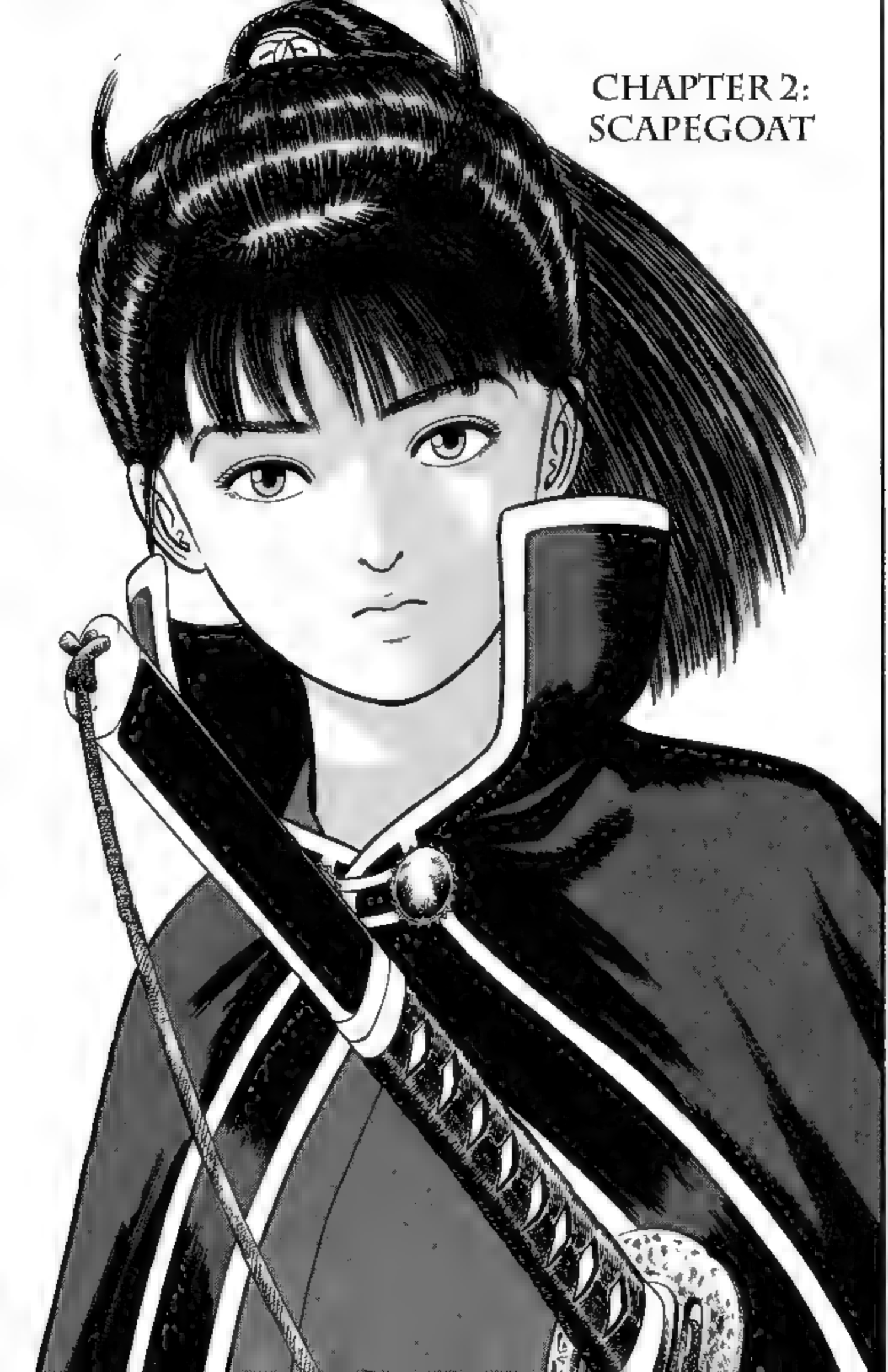
EH!?
!!

LATER, ALRIGHT? I'LL EXPLAIN IT ALL LATER!
GIVE ME THE EXPLANATION RIGHT NOW. WHO THE HELL IS THIS GIRL?

SWEAR TO ME NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE TWO!
SINCE I'VE PROM-ISED TO STAY MY HAND,

.....
.....
I VOW IT.
GOT IT.
40
KIKUUU!
OKO-SAN,
KIKUUU!

SHE WASN'T BISHAMONTEN'S DAUGHTER, NOR HIS WOMAN.
AAAH, SHE'S NOT RELATED...
SHOULD WE DO HER?
OF COURSE! FINE GAL LIKE THAT!
41
HEEEEY, SIS....



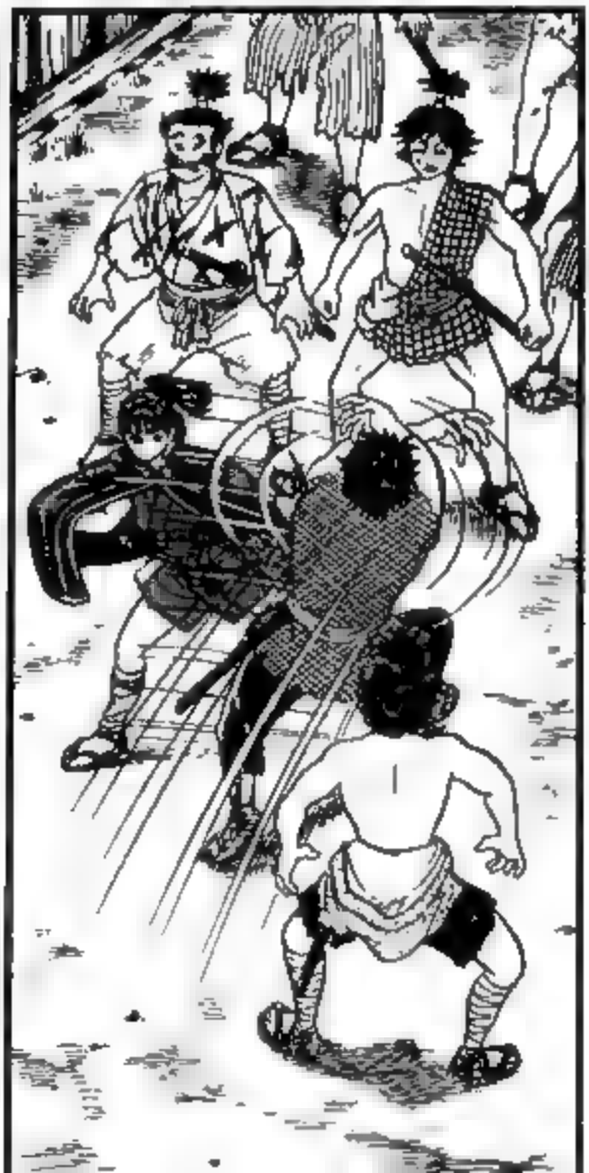
CHAPTER 2: SCAPEGOAT

I WON'T LET YOU PASS!
HO HOO!
OH!
OH!
OH!

I'M DROOLING!
WHAT BEAUTIFUL LEGS YA GOT THERE!
I'M IN A RATHER FOUL MOOD.
OUT OF MY WAY.
2
THAT WARNING NOT TO DO A THING SHOULD NATURALLY EXTEND TO THESE MEN AS WELL...

ALL THOSE RONIN HERE ARE LIKELY SOLDIERS MEANT TO BE USED FOR STEALING THE GOLD... IT SEEMS I CAN'T EVEN DECREASE THEIR NUMBERS BY A SINGLE HEAD, HM...

OHH!



RIIIGHT!
GET HER!

EH!?
OH!?

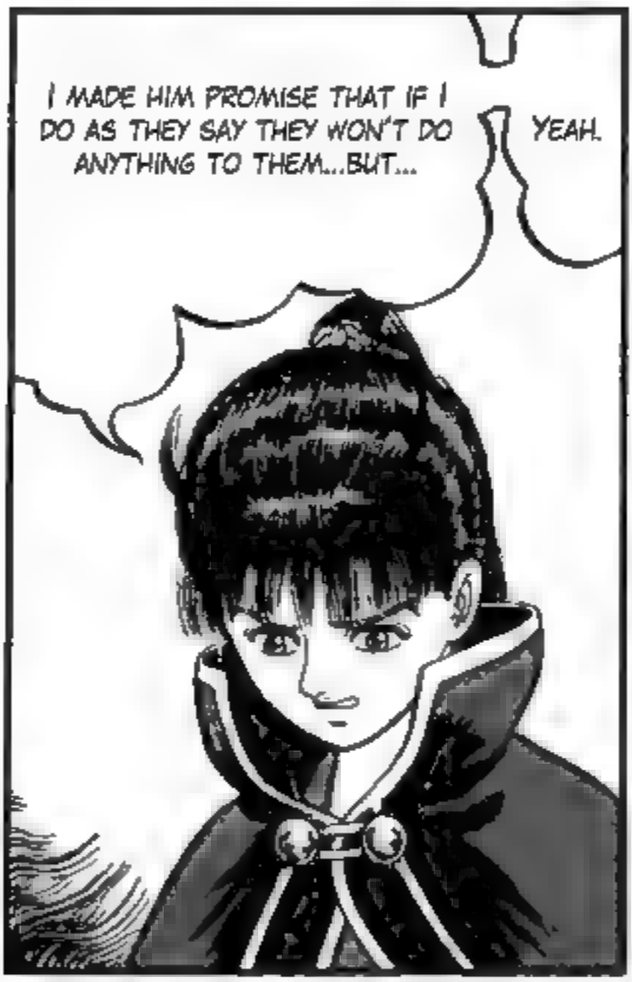
ギッ
チャガッ

YAH!
……
WHA!?

UOH!?

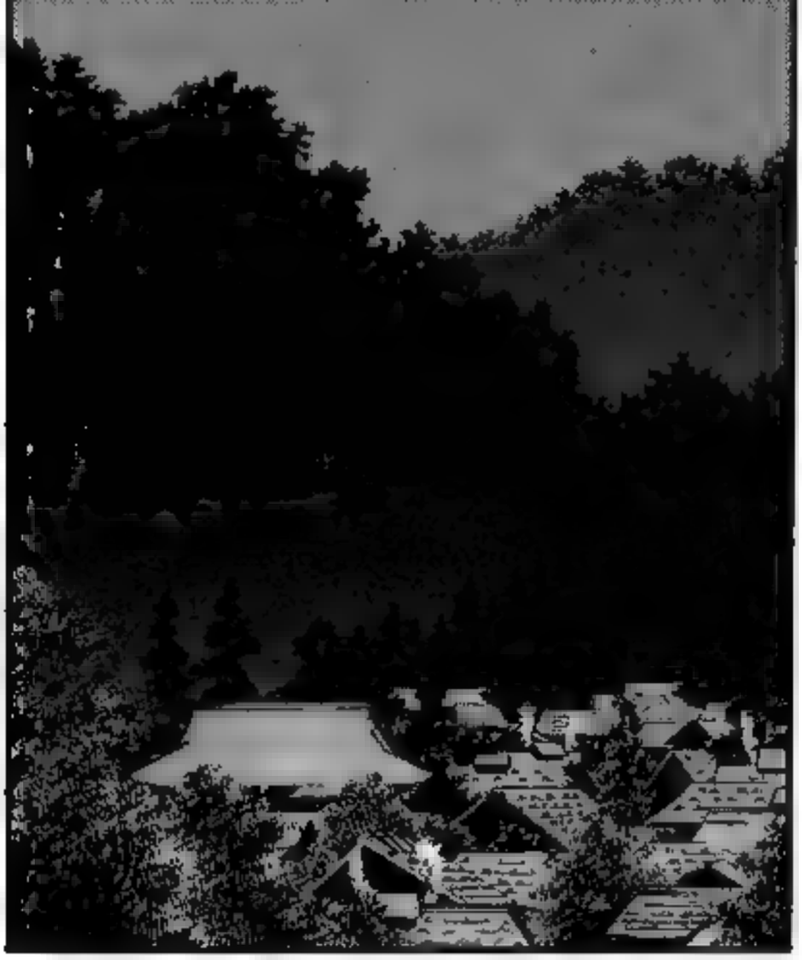
.....
.....
.....
.....
OHH!
HYOH!

AH!! AZU-MI-SAN IS BACK!!


I MADE HIM PROMISE THAT IF I DO AS THEY SAY THEY WON'T DO ANYTHING TO THEM...BUT...
YEAH.

DID YOU REALLY GO TO THE POST TOWN
TO MEET WITH B-BISHA-MONTEN?

YOUR MOTHER IS GOING THROUGH ALL THIS!
IT'S MY FAULT THAT
I BEG YOUR PARDON, KENNOSUKE-DONO!



NO...
STOOOP!
LET'S DO HER!
WHAT A CUTE GIRL, EH!?

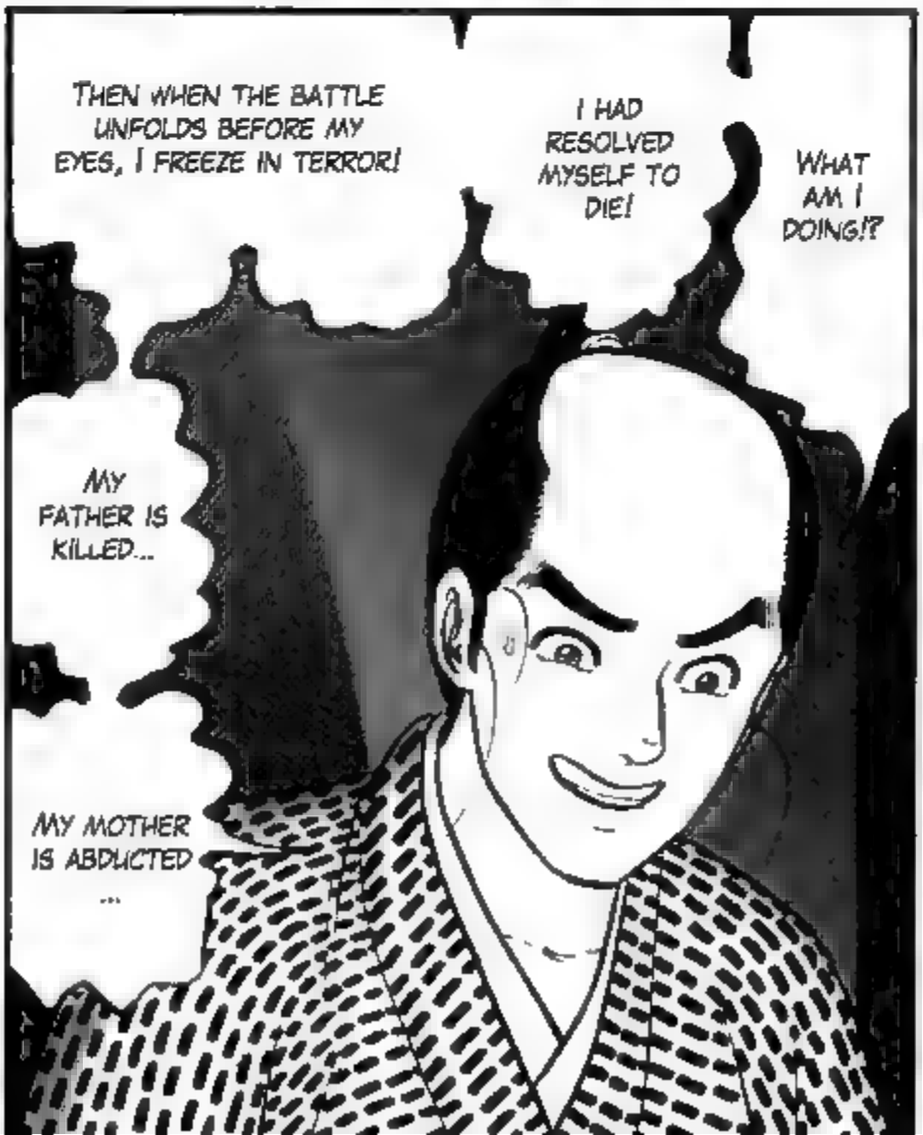
OH, OKO-SAN... I'M SO SORRY!

OH, KIKU...
IF THEY LEARN KIKU IS REALLY A MAN...WHAT WILL THEY DO!?

OKO-SAN!
KIKU!
AHHH! HOW WILL THEY BE TREATED!?

AH...AH...
AH...

UH...
PFF..


THEN WHEN THE BATTLE UNFOLDS BEFORE MY EYES, I FREEZE IN TERROR!
I HAD RESOLVED MYSELF TO DIE!
WHAT AM I DOING!?
MY FATHER IS KILLED...
MY MOTHER IS ABDUCTED ...

WHAT IS IT, KEN-NOSUKE?

AND NOW ..ONCE AGAIN...I'M SHIVERING IN FEAR LIKE THIS WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO DO ANYTHING...

NO...
I WILL GO AND RESCUE MY MOTHER!

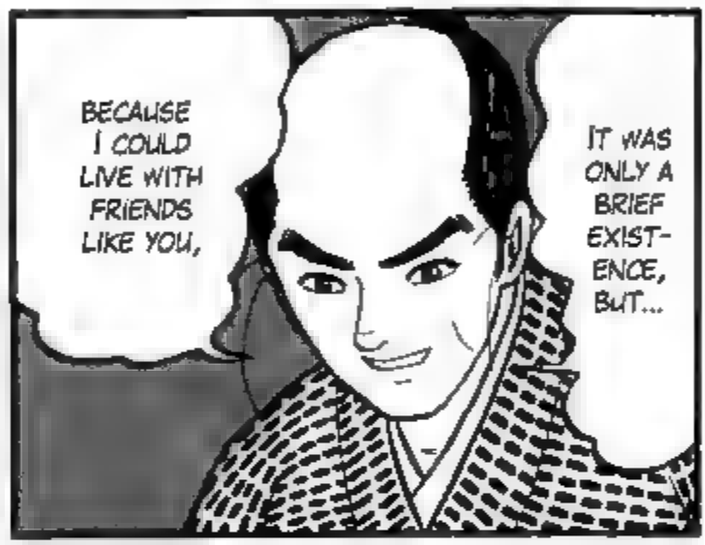
ALONG WITH HER!
I'LL GO DIE

NO, ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS DOMAIN!
MY FATHER, MY MOTHER ...
I'LL GO DIE AS WEL!
ME, TOO!
OF COURSE!
I'LL GO!
I CHOOSE THE LATTER!
HAVE GOT ONLY ONE OF TWO POSSIBLE OPTIONS. TO CONTINUE LIVING IN DISGRACE, OR TO DIE FIGHTING!!

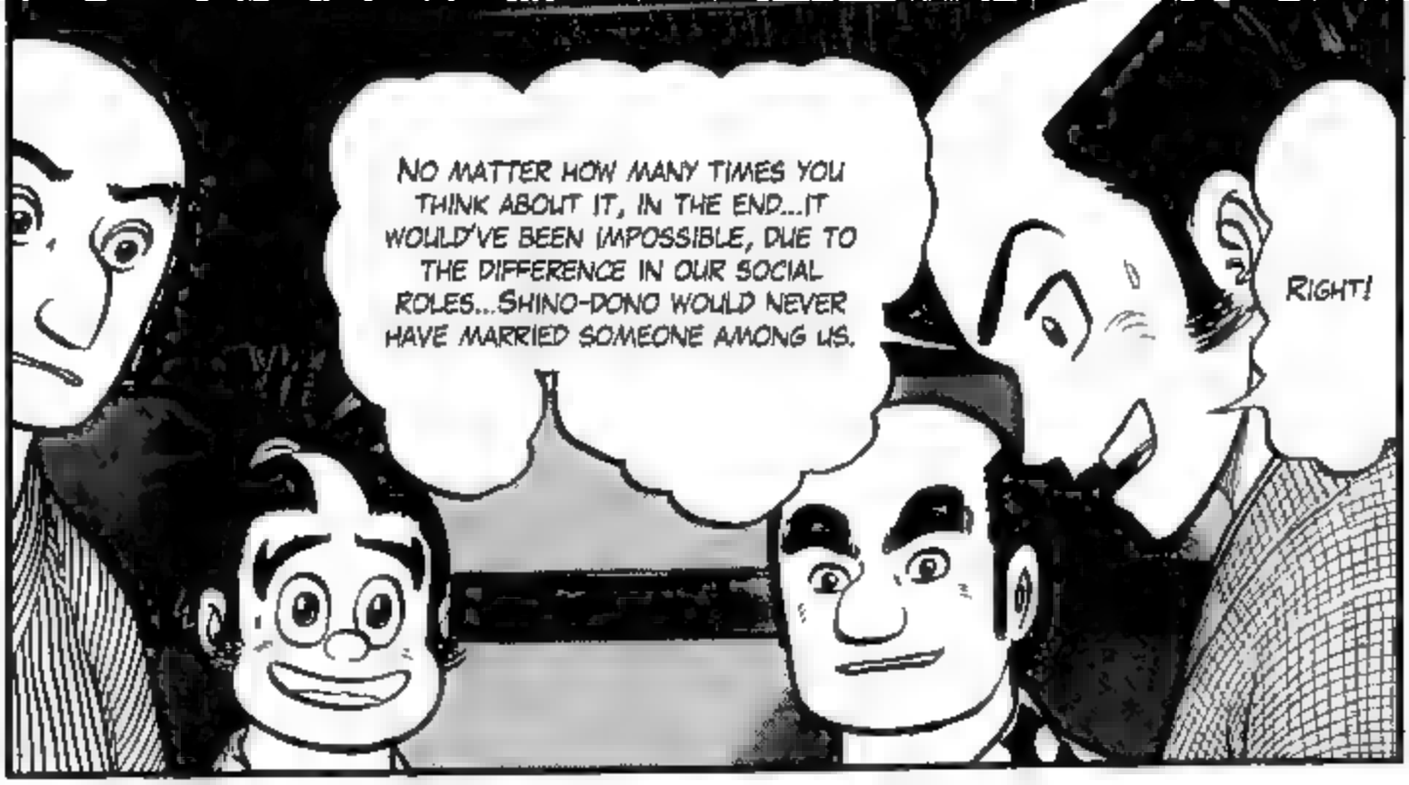
OHHH!
LIVE AND DIE AS ONE!
WE
WHATEVER THE CASE MAY BE,

JOTARO!
BUNZO!
HIKOMA!
KAN-ZAEMON!

I COULD TRULY CLAIM IT TO BE A HAPPY LIFE!


BECAUSE I COULD LIVE WITH FRIENDS LIKE YOU,
IT WAS ONLY A BRIEF EXIST-ENCE, BUT...

MY YOUTH...COULD ONLY BE FULFILLED...BY AN EMBRACE OF PASSION FROM MY CHERISHED, BEAUTIFUL SHINO-DONO!


NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IN THE END...IT WOULD'VE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE, DUE TO THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR SOCIAL ROLES...SHINO-DONO WOULD NEVER HAVE MARRIED SOMEONE AMONG US.
RIGHT!

HELD HER WITHIN OUR DREAMS!
WE ALL
WE ALL ADMIRED HER EQUALLY!
BUT.. BECAUSE OF THIS...

SUCH WONDERFUL FRIENDS LIKE YOU!
AND I HAD...
I DO SO ADMIRE SHINO-DONO!
RIGHT!

SNIFF
I THINK THIS TRULY WAS A GRAND LIFE!

OOOH!
WITH THE BEAUTIFUL LADY SHINO IN OUR HEARTS!
FOR THE SAKE OF OUR FRIENDSHIP!
LET'S ALL DIE TOGETHER!

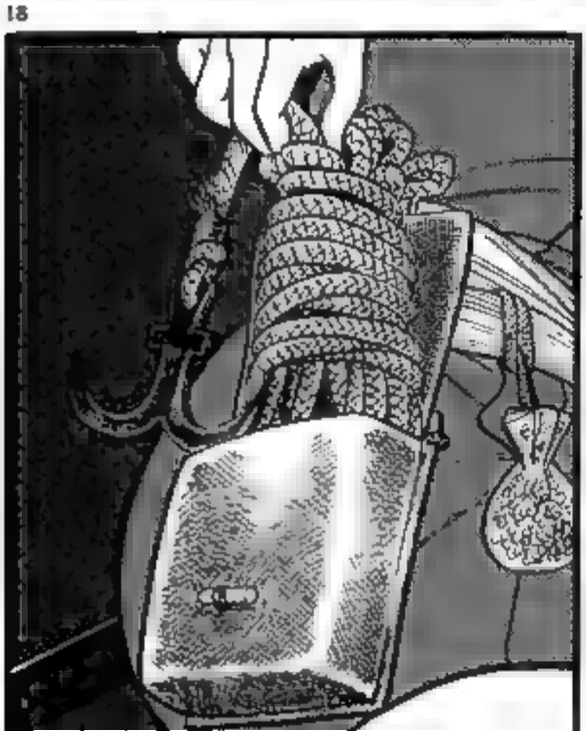
OHHH!

THE BACK OF THE TEMPLE WHERE THE HOSTAGES ARE BEING HELD HAS SUCH A HEAVILY INCLINED SLOPE...
NOW I SEE WHY...
...EVEN THOUGH THE GUNMEN WOULD HAVE SHOT THEM, THEY CHARGED FROM THE FRONT SIDE...

!!
THEY EVEN PREPARED FOR INTRUDERS FROM THIS SIDE...

I WONDER IF KIKU AND OKO-SAN ARE HELD IN THE SAME PLACE AS THE HOSTAGES.
OR ARE THEY BOTH HELD IN TWO DIFFERENT PLACES?

I'D LIKE TO GET AT LEAST AN IDEA OF THEIR POSITION.
IT'D BE GOOD IF I SAVED THEM...BUT IF IT PROVES IMPOSSIBLE,



AS I THOUGHT, THEY'RE KEEPING A NIGHT WATCH.

SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF GUARDS ON WATCH DETAIL MEANS THAT
KIKU AND OKO-SAN COULD BE WITHIN THE TEMPLE.

BUT...
CAN I SEARCH AROUND INSIDE THE TEMPLE
WITH SO MANY GUARDS ABOUT AND NOT BE DETECTED?

.....

IF I WERE FOUND, IT'D BE KNOWN I BROKE MY WORD... AND...
THEY COULD HARM.. OKO-SAN AND. KIKU...

KENNOSUKE-
DONO AND
THE OTHERS!

S-STOP! IT'S
USELESS! YOU'LL
ALL BE SLAUGHTERED!

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ガラ
ガラ
ガラ
ガラ

TO THE BACK!!
AAAH!

SO THEY'VE COME!

KILL'EM!
HYAOH!
FOUND THEM! OVER THERE!

WHAT!? ONLY FIVE!?

IT'S NOT THAT!
THEY DIDN'T COME TO ATTACK!

IT'S HER!
IT'S...
KEKE!
OHH!
AZUMI!

HE'S NOT HERE TO FIGHT AT ALL!
HE WAS JUST SO WORRIED ABOUT HIS MOTHER BEING IMPRISONED THAT HE COULDN'T STAY STILL!

GO HOME!
FOOL!

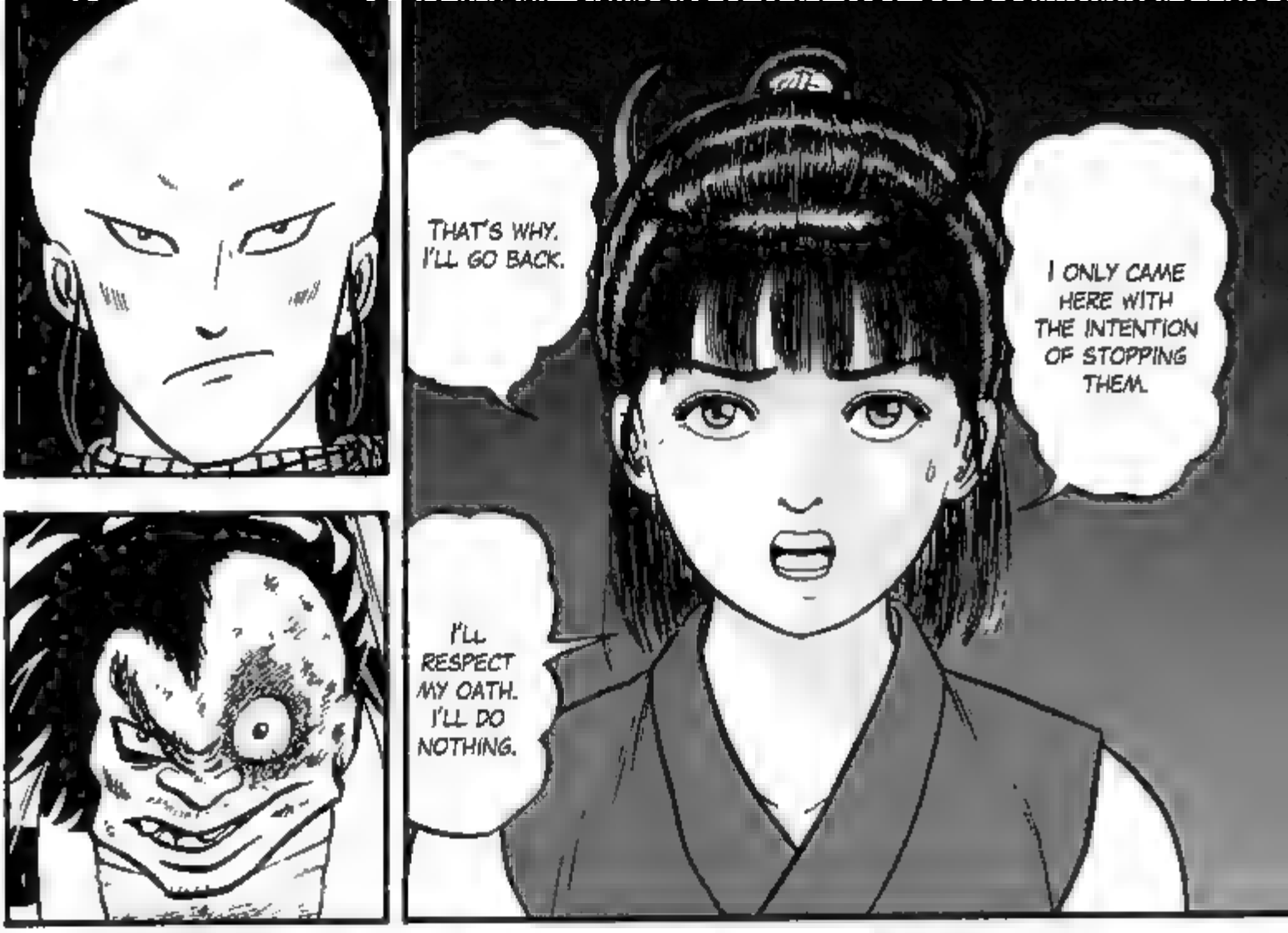
GO HOME!

AAAH!
あああ
ああああ
あああ

.....

HEHE!
HEHE.

WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?
HM!?
THE WOMAN FROM THIS MORNING!


I ONLY CAME HERE WITH THE INTENTION OF STOPPING THEM.
THAT'S WHY. I'LL GO BACK.
I'LL RESPECT MY OATH. I'LL DO NOTHING.

カ!!
……

30

CHAPTER 3: WHAT LIES BEYOND THE INTRIGUE

HYAAH HOHO HO!

3

ARE ANY OF YOU HURT?
.....
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LET'S GO.

.....
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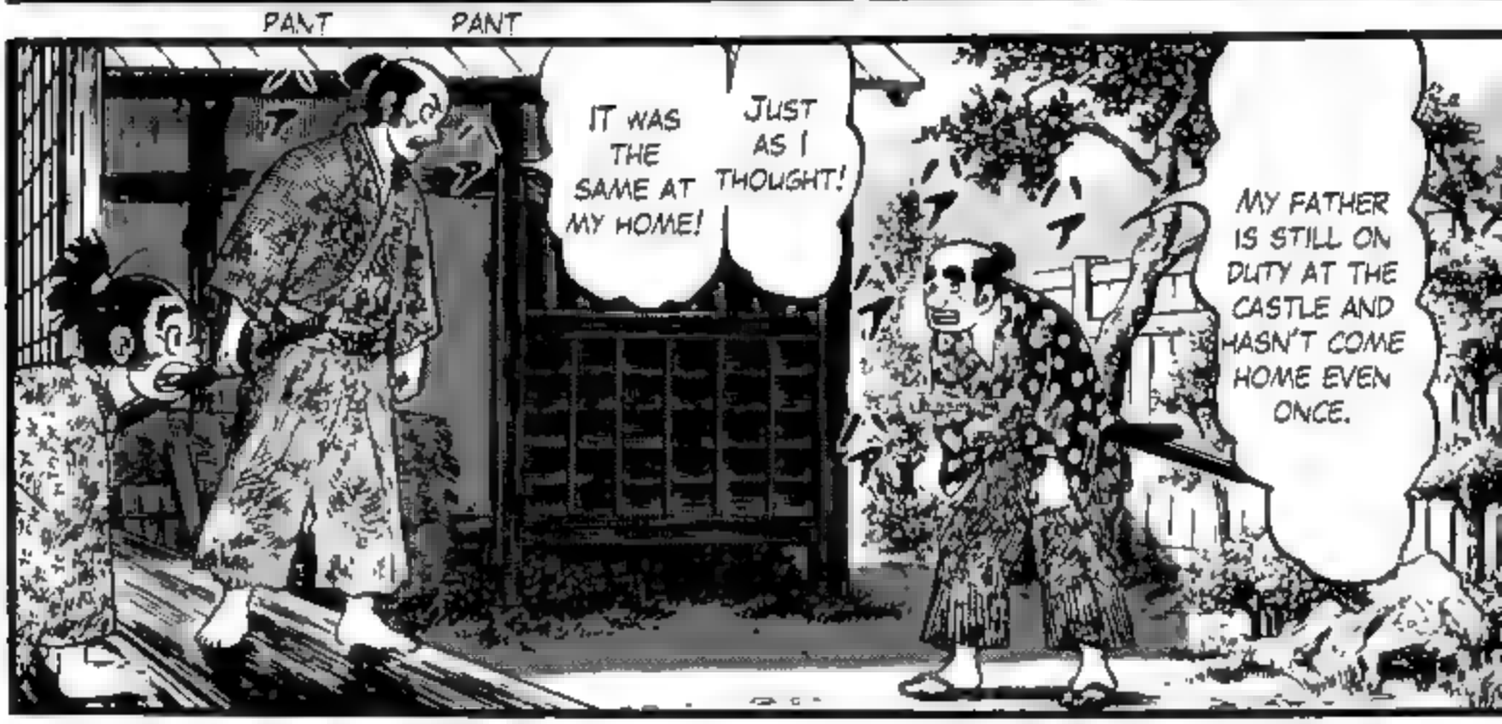
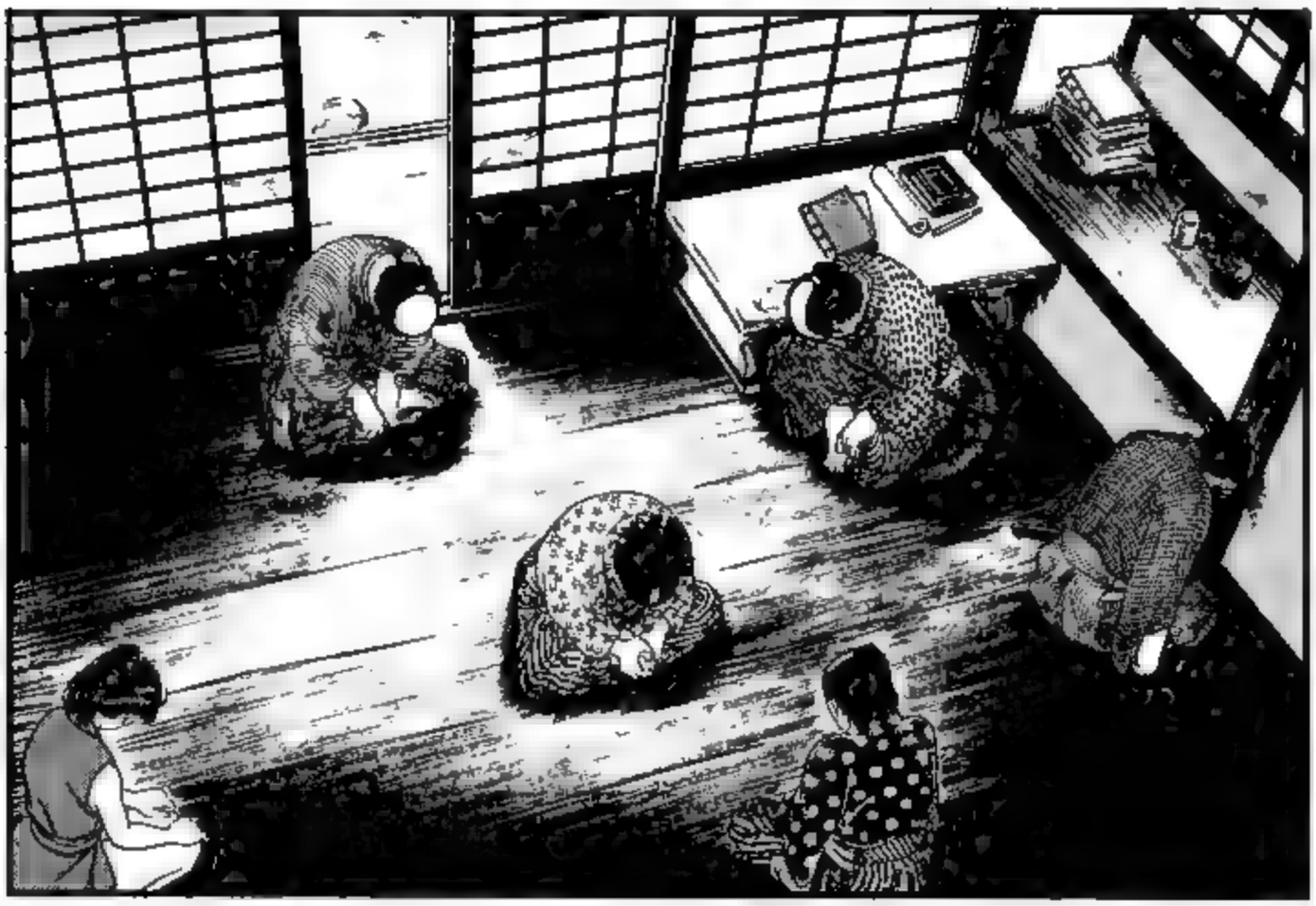
.....
.....
.....


PANT
PANT
IT WAS THE SAME AT MY HOME!
JUST AS I THOUGHT!
MY FATHER IS STILL ON DUTY AT THE CASTLE AND HASN'T COME HOME EVEN ONCE.

POST T-TOWN TOMORROW!

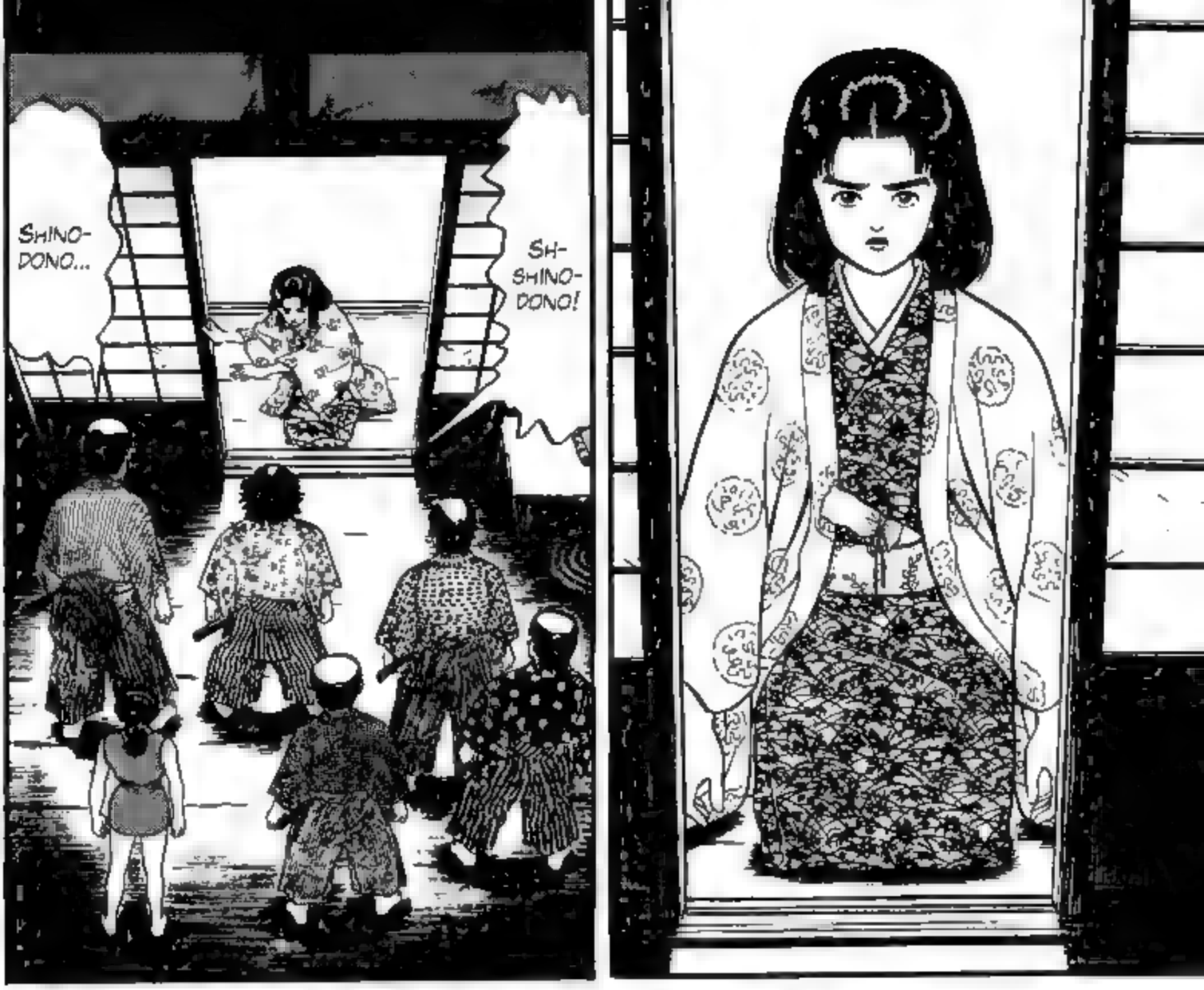
PANT
PANT
IT SEEMS THAT THE PROCESSION WITH THE SHOGUNATE GOLD IS GONNA PASS THROUGH THE
BUT WE RECEIVED WORD THAT

TOMOR-
ROW...
TOMOR-
ROW...
TOMOR-
ROW...



UGH!
PA. THET... TIC!!!
LET'S GO! LET'S GO ATTACK BISHAMONTEN AND ALL HIS MEEEN!
CAN WE ONLY REMAIN IDLE WHILE WATCHING OUR LAND STOLEN FROM US WITHOUT RAISING A FINGER...?
DON'T!
LET US DIE AS ONE!
LET'S GO!
STOP!

WHAT MEANING IS THERE IN A USELESS DEATH!?
LET'S RAID THEM!
ALRIGHT! WE SHALL DIE!
IF YOU WANNA DIE, YOU SHOULD AT LEAST DIE FIGHTING TRYING TO PROTECT THE PROCESSION CARRYING THE GOLD, RIGHT!?
WE VOWED TO DIE FIGHTING RATHER THAN GO ON LIVING COVERED IN SHAME!!
PLEASE DO NOT DIE!!!!


SHINO-
DONO...
SH-
SHINO-
DONO!

AS I
THOUGHT
...

I COULDN'T STOP THINKING IF THAT WAS REALLY THE CASE, SO I CAME HERE...
AS I THOUGHT, YOU WERE READYING YOURSELVES TO DIE!

I...
I...
.....

ALWAYS HAVE YOU.... IN MY MIND...
AND HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR A LONG TIME...

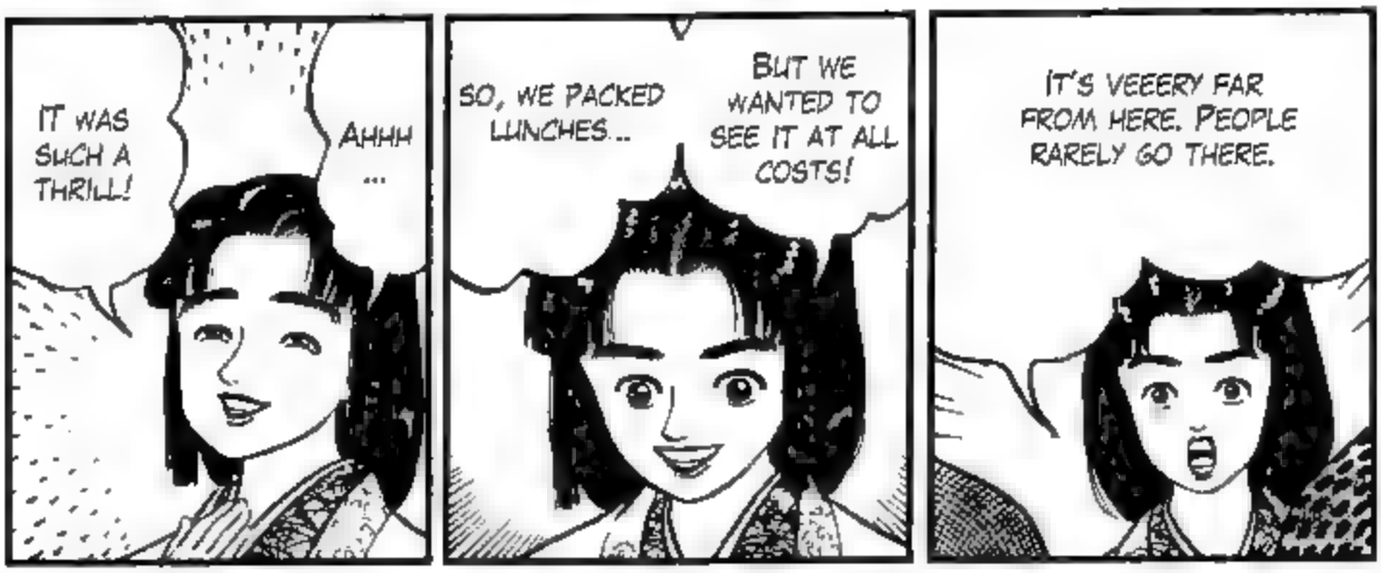
WHEN I SAID THAT I WANTED TO PLAY LIKE THAT TOO, FATHER AND MOTHER HARSHLY SCOLDED ME.
WHEN YOU WERE CHILDREN...YOU PLAYED AROUND UNTIL YOU SEEMED MADE OF MUD...I ALWAYS WATCHED YOU WITH ENVY FROM AFAR...

EH!? ARE SAMURAI DAUGHTERS LIKE THIS!?.....I'VE BEEN...ALWAYS TOGETHER WITH EVERYONE...

I COULD HAVE DONE SUCH RECKLESS THINGS UNTIL THE SUN SET!
WHY WAS I BORN A WOMAN? IF I HAD BEEN BORN A MAN, I COULD HAVE JOINED YOU!
I HAD SUCH REGRETS ..

AND YOU ALL...
A KAPPA APPEARED IN A POND IN THE DEPTHS OF MT. TENJIN.
THERE WAS A RUMOR,
IF I'M RIGHT, THERE WAS A RUMOR WHEN I WAS BUT TWELVE...

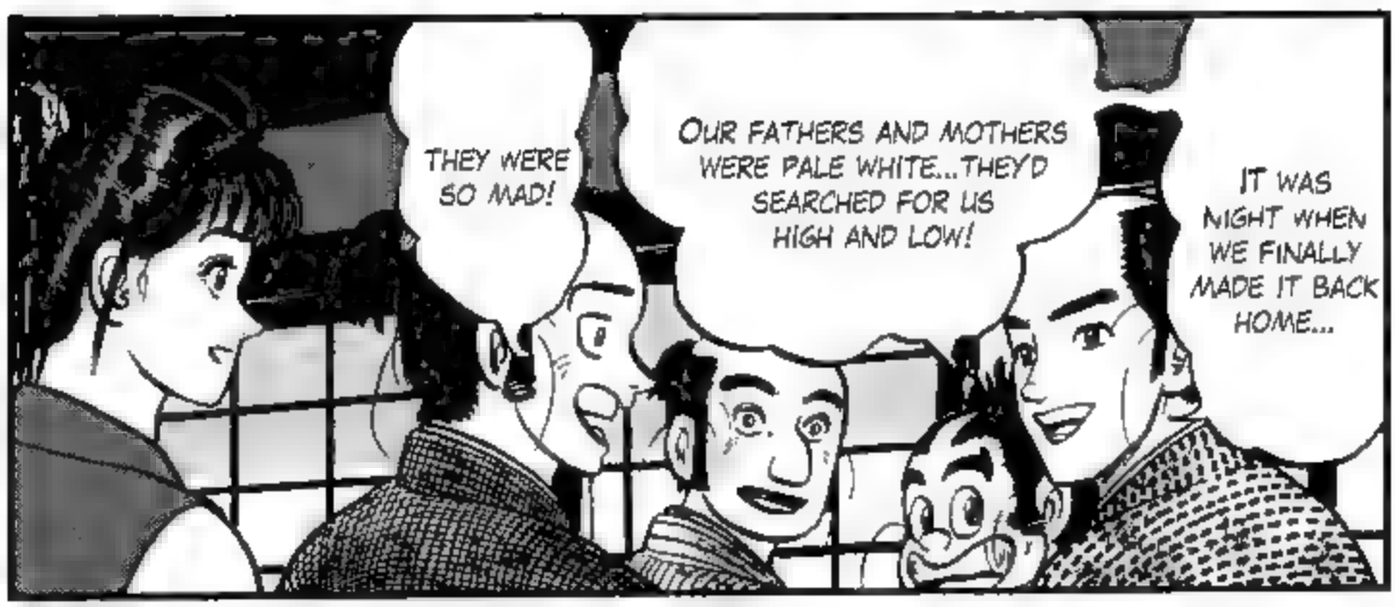
WAS IT REALLY THERE!?
A KAPPA!?
INVITED ME TO GO SEE IT WITH YOU!


IT WAS SUCH A THRILL!
AHHH ...
SO, WE PACKED LUNCHES...
BUT WE WANTED TO SEE IT AT ALL COSTS!
IT'S VEEERY FAR FROM HERE. PEOPLE RARELY GO THERE.

DID YOU SEE IT!?
WAS IT THERE!?
AD THE KAPPA !?
THAT WAS THE FIRST ADVENTURE
I'D HAD SINCE I WAS BORN!

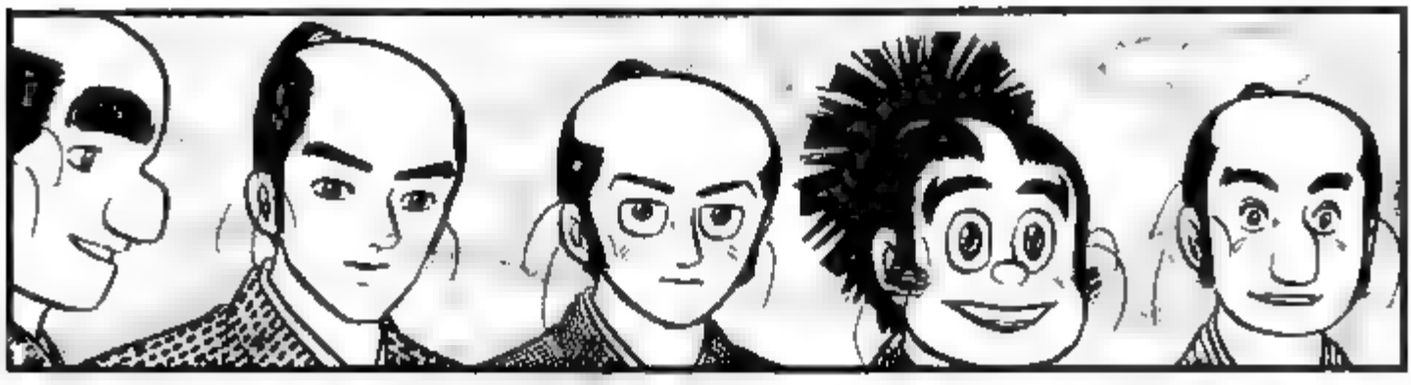
IT NEVER SHOWED.
WE STAYED HIDDEN AND WAITED AN AWFUL LONG TIME NEAR THE POND, BUT...

OHOHOHO...
AHAHA HA!
AND YOU FELL INTO A SWAMP ON THE WAY BACK!
YES!
MORE IMPORTANTLY, ON OUR WAY BACK, WE GOT LOST!


THEY WERE SO MAD!
OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS WERE PALE WHITE...THEY'D SEARCHED FOR US HIGH AND LOW!
IT WAS NIGHT WHEN WE FINALLY MADE IT BACK HOME...

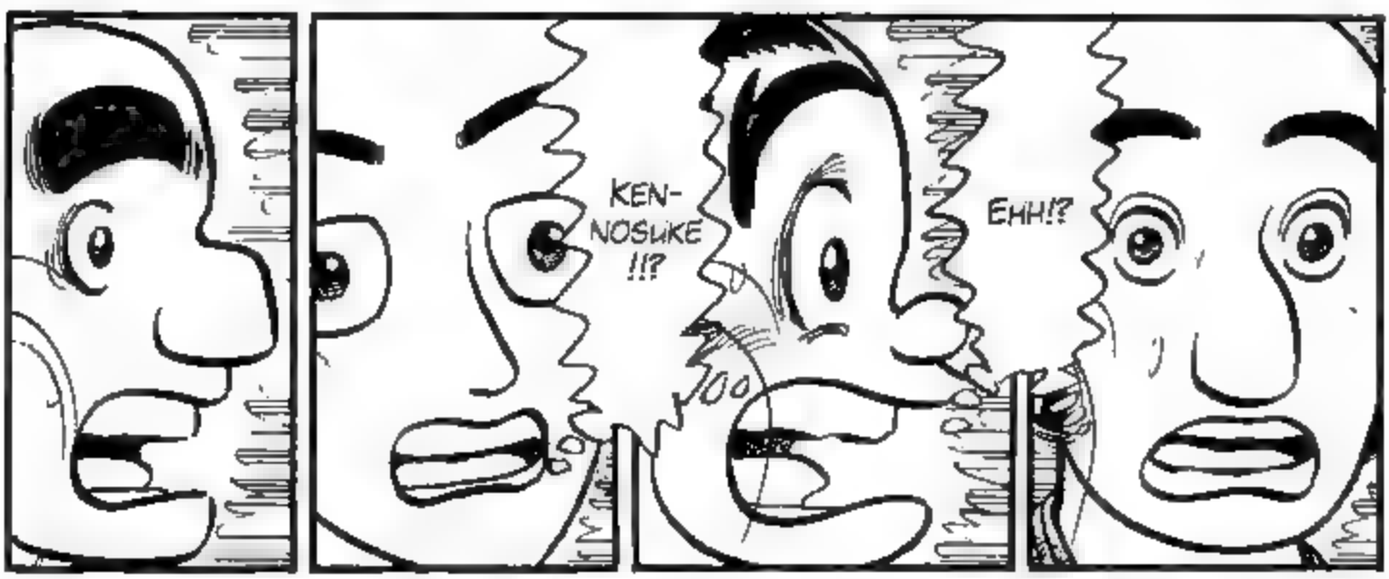
I WAS TOLD TO NEVER PLAY WITH YOU ALL AGAIN!
MY PARENTS LOCKED ME IN THE CELLAR.

I LEARNED YOU'RE ALL SUCH...KIND PEOPLE...!
MOREOVER, DURING THAT ADVENTURE...
WAS SO MUCH FUN!
BUT THAT ADVEN-TURE...



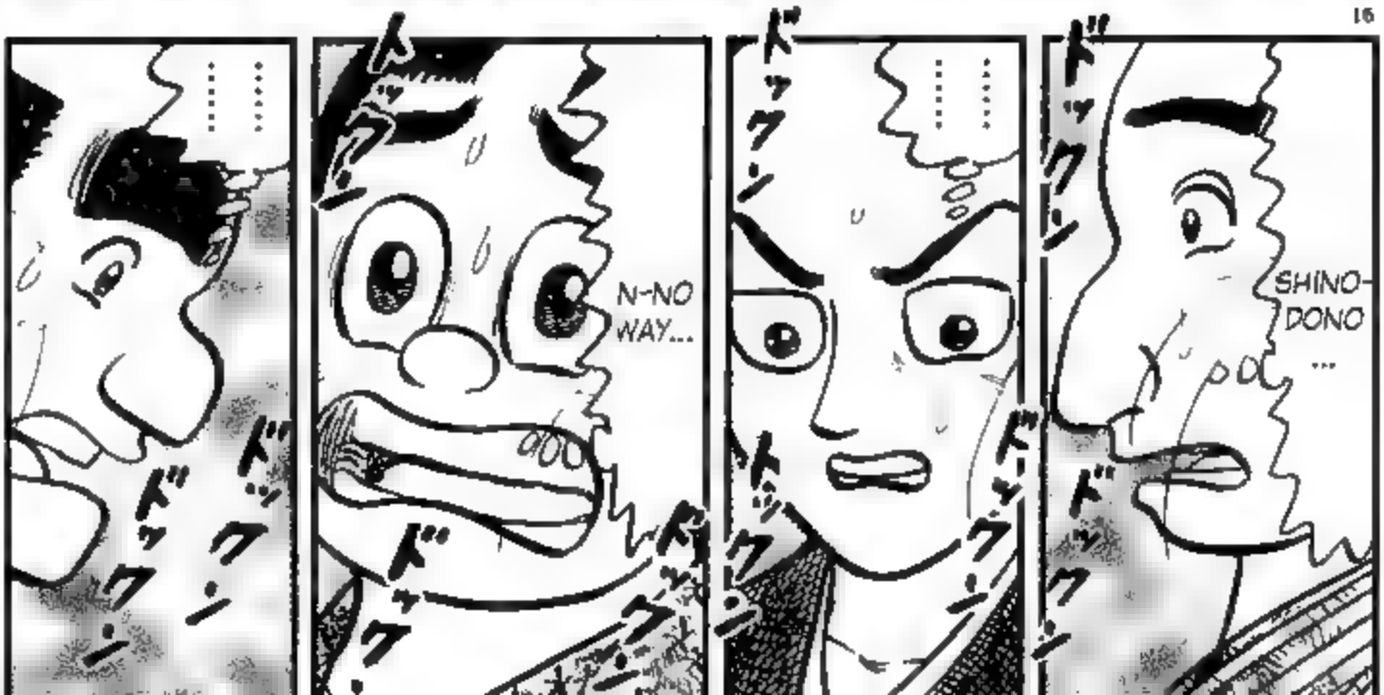
SINCE THEN...SINCE THAT TIME...I...

I LOVE HIM SO DEARLY!
SINCE THEN, I, SHINO, HAVE BEEN IN LOVE WITH KENNOSUKE-DONO!!
!!


KEN-NOSUKE !!?
EHH!?

IF THE COUNTRY WERE TO DISAPPEAR, YOUR SUITABILITY AND SO ON WOULDN'T MATTER ANYMORE!!

DO NOT EVEN THINK OF DYING!
SO, PLEASE! DO NOT DIE!
I BEG OF YOU!
ドックン
ドックン
ドックン


N-NO WAY...
SHINO-DONO ...
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ドックン
ドックン
ドックン

SHINO-
DONO
…
ドクン
ドクン
ドクン
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ドクン
……
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……

……
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……

……
……

.....

OKO-SAN...
KIKU...
OH, PLEASE...
PLEASE...

AWWWW, DAMMIT!
EH!?!?
WHAAAT?! REALLY, A... MAN!?

.....

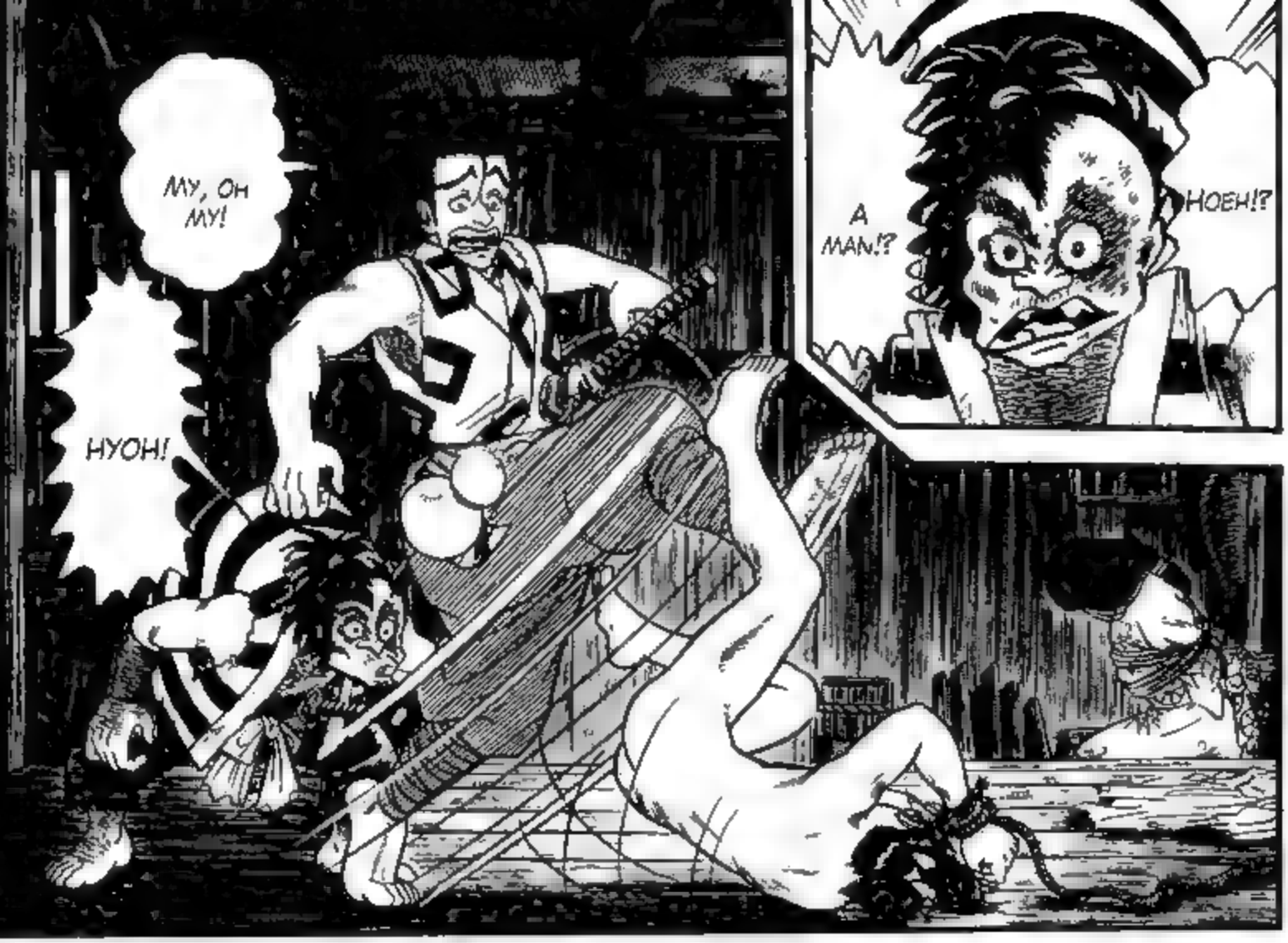
UGGH! WHAT THE!?
TSSSK! DISGU-STIN'!
HAHAHA! SERVES YOU LOT RIGHT!
KIKU-SAN.. IS A... MAN?
!!!

HEY, IF YOU GOT IT, LET ME PUT MY KIMONO ON!

AH!?

...HUH?
S-SORRY...BUT THAT ONE...IT AIN'T A LADY, IT'S A MAN!

SAKAKURA TOLD US NOT TO TOUCH THEM, RIGHT?


MY, OH MY!
HYOH!
A MAN!?
HOEH!?

OH HO!

THAT'LL TICKLE SEIRYU'S FANCY...
A HAND-SOME MAN, HM?

.....

KIKU-SAN HAS A FEVER!
PLEASE HAVE MERCY!

HOHOHO HOYOOH!
GO GIVE SEIRYU THE GOOD NEWS!

FOR REAL?
WAIT JUST A MOMENT!
I SAID NOT TO LAY A HAND ON THOSE CAPTIVES, DID I NOT!?
JUST WHAT YOU LIKE, SEIRYU!!! HYOH OH!

YOU'RE USING US....
JUST WHEN DID YOU GET UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WERE FOLLOWING YOUR ORDERS?
AND SO WE'RE USING YOU IN TURN.

HEY, SAKA-KURA...

YOU'RE A DOG OF THE SHOGUN, WITHOUT A DOUBT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN!?
.....

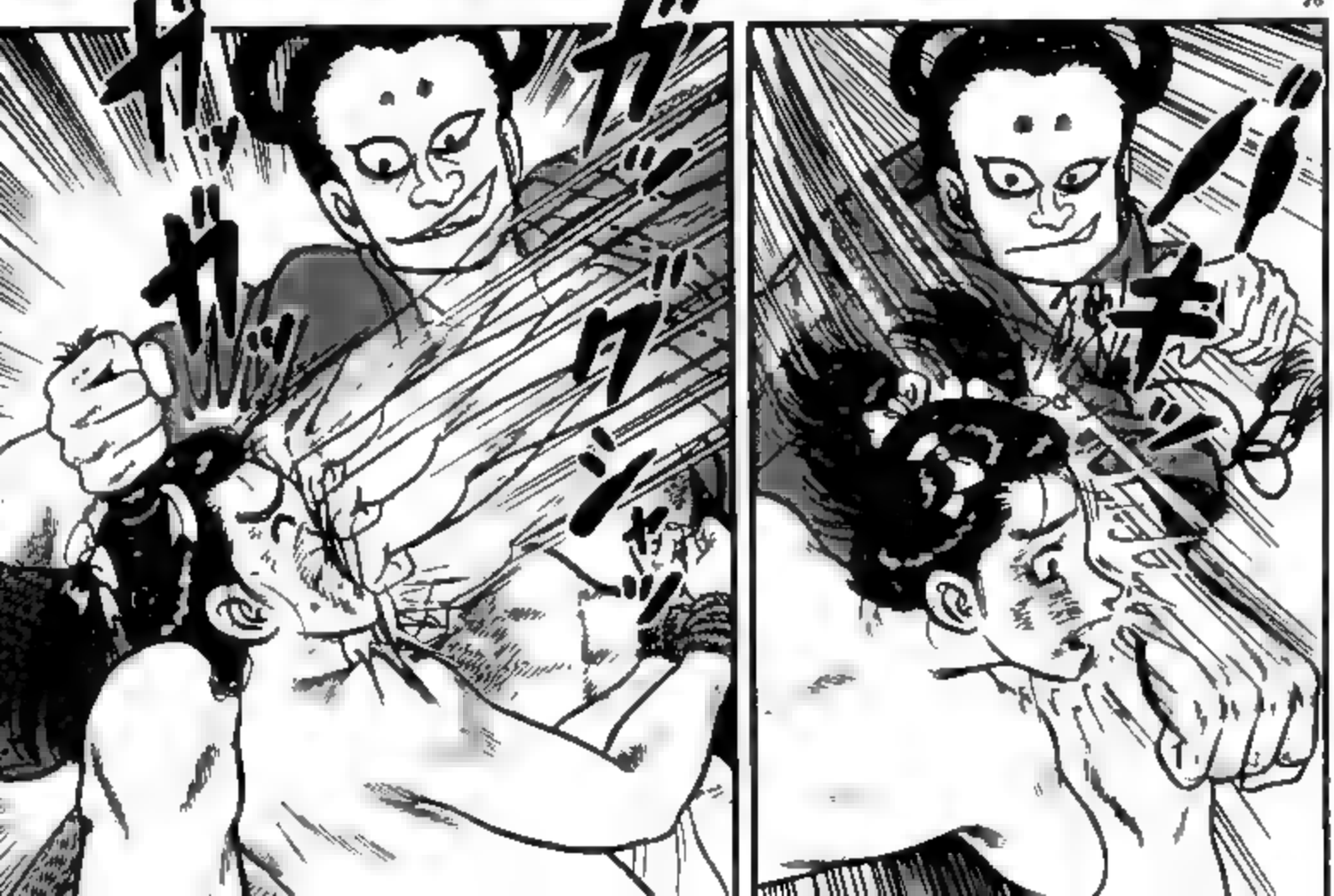
WELL, IF I THINK ABOUT IT, THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS.
NOW JUST WHY IS A DOG OF THE SHOGUN HAVING US STEAL THE SHOGUNATE'S GOLD...?

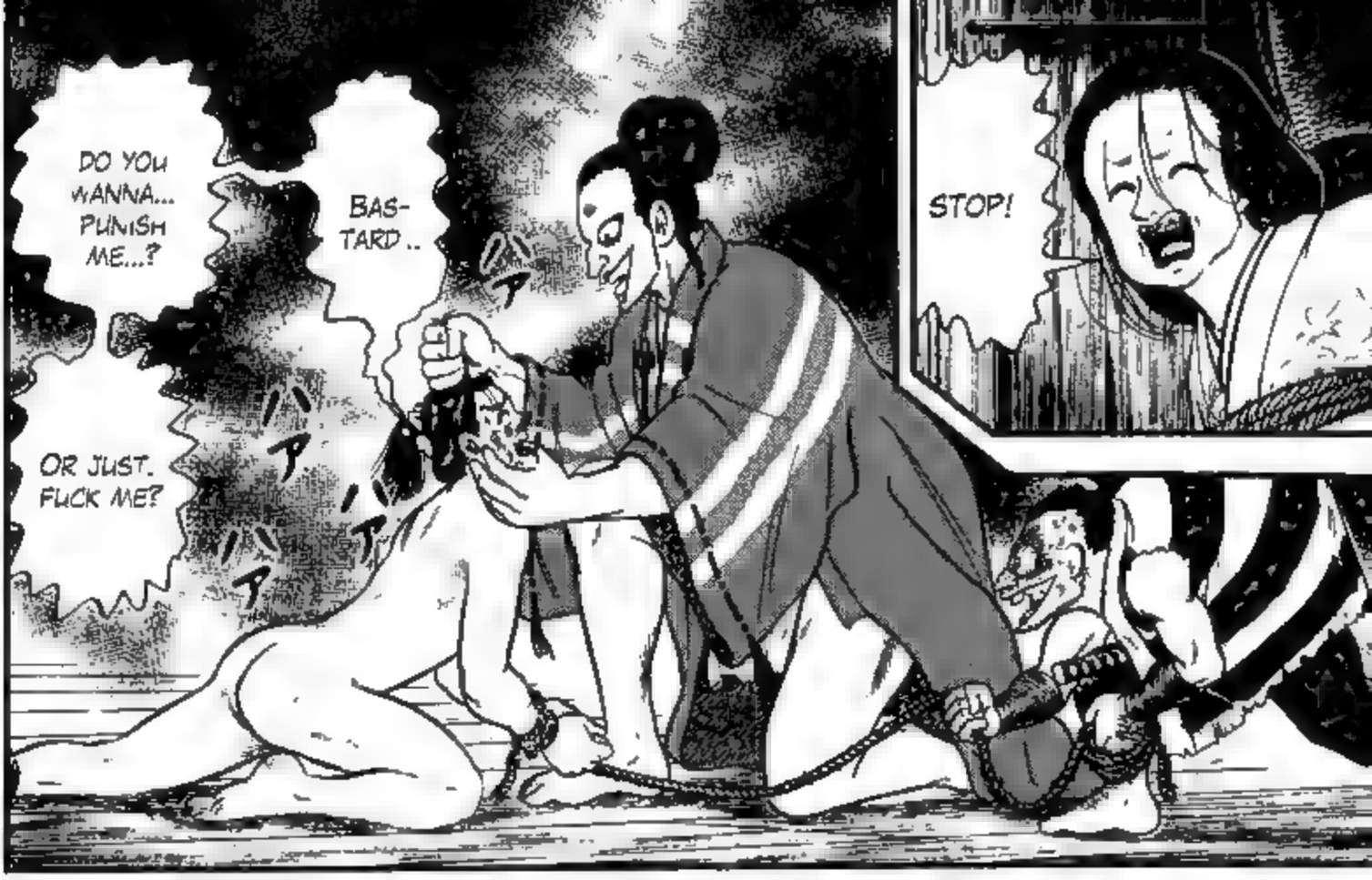
AND THEN THEY'LL STEAL THE GOLD FROM US IN TURN THAT THEY HAD US STEAL IN THE FIRST PLACE! WHAT A DIRTY LITTLE PLOT...
THE SHOGUNATE IS TRYING TO STEAL THIS LAND USING THE GOLD AS AN EXCUSE...
AM I WRONG?

BULLS-EYE.
UH UH...
.....
.....
.....
SAKAKURA, YOU'VE LOOKED DOWN ON US TOO MUCH!
REALLY, THOUGH,

FUHAHA HAHAHA!
HEH...

PLEASE STOOOP!
STOP!!




DO YOU WANNA... PUNISH ME...?
BAS-TARD..
OR JUST. FUCK ME?
ハア ハア ハア
STOP!

ベ

WHICH ONE IS IT?!?!

KIEE HEE!
YOU SHOULD KNOW! SEIRYU LIKES TO DO HIS PUNISHING WHILE HE'S DOING HIS FUCKING!!!

STOOOOOOP!
S....

バキッ!
ガッ!
ボゴッ
ガッ

STOP IT!!!

HE DOES THAT OFTEN...
AH...
ERGH!

UNTIL THEY FLEE WITH THE GOLD...
TRUST IN THOSE WORDS AND STAY PUT...

I CAN'T DO A THING, BUT...
I SWEAR.

KIKU...
I'M SORRY!
OKO-SAN, I'M SO SORRY...

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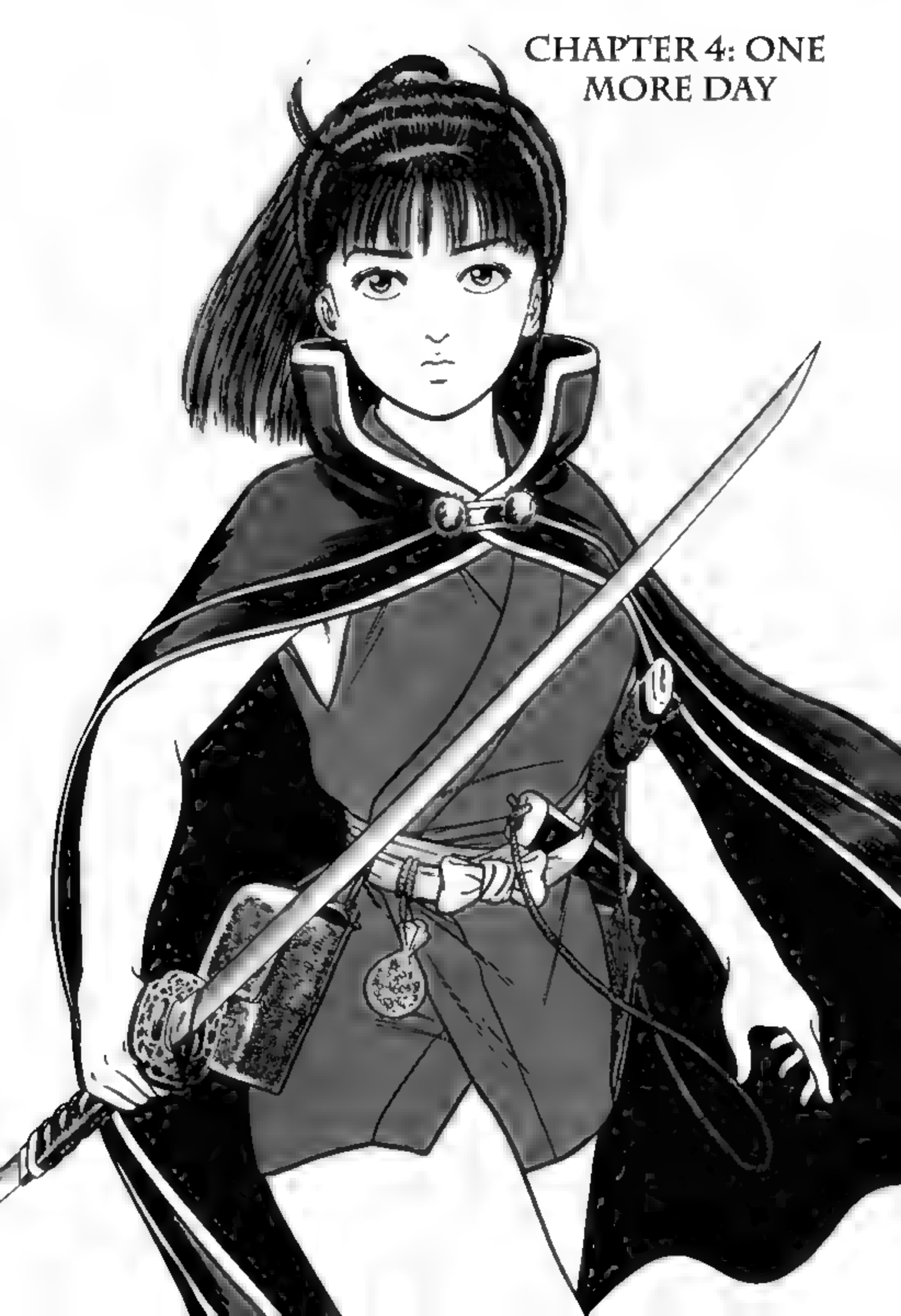
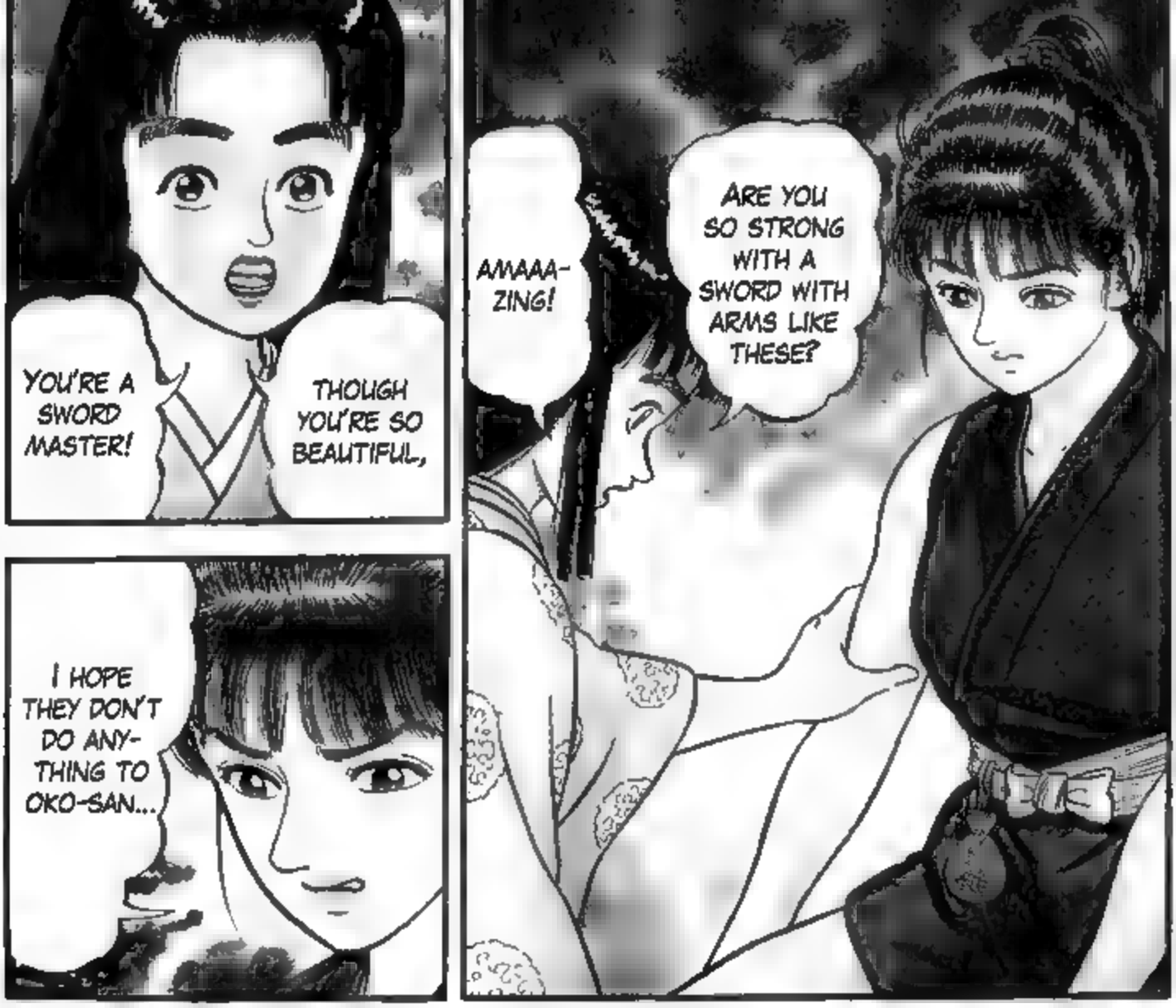
CHAPTER 4: ONE MORE DAY



THAT'S WHY...IT'S MY FAULT THAT KENNOSUKE'S MOTHER WAS TAKEN AS A HOSTAGE.
IS...IS THAT TRUE...? THAT YOU WERE...AN ASSASSIN!?
YES...
UNBELIEVABLE...
2


YOU'RE A SWORD MASTER!
THOUGH YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL,
AMAAA-ZING!
ARE YOU SO STRONG WITH A SWORD WITH ARMS LIKE THESE?
I HOPE THEY DON'T DO ANY-THING TO OKO-SAN...

WHAT A SHOCK! YOU, A GIRL CHASED BY THE SHOGUN OF THIS COUNTRY!
I'M SO SORRY... IT'S ALL MY FAULT...
UNBELIEVABLE... AMAAZING!
IF THEY DO ANYTHING TO HER...I'LL NEVER FORGIVE THEM!

!!

NOW, WE'RE GOING TO FACE OUR DECISIVE LAST BATTLE IN ORDER TO RESCUE TAKIGAWA-SAMA AND THE OTHERS...
THERE'S THE POSSIBILITY THAT, IF THEY'RE IN HASTE, THE PROCESSION CARRYING THE GOLD WILL PASS THROUGH HERE TOMORROW TOWARD MORNING...WE CAN'T WASTE A SINGLE MOMENT...

.....
ONLY THIRTY MEN WHO ARE VOLUNTARILY YET IN SERVICE WILL BE AT THE FRONT...

NO MORE FIT AND HOTBLOODED YOUNG SOLDIERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO THROW AWAY THEIR LIVES...PLEASE KEEP THIS A SECRET...
THEY'RE MOSTLY EXPERIENCED OLD MEN...

EVEN IF I
WISHED TO STOP YOUR CHOICE, WOULD THAT BE IMPOSSIBLE?
YES. WE WILL NOT STOP.
.....

WILL THEY ATTACK?
IN THAT CASE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT TURMOIL, I COULD SEARCH FOR KIKU AND OKO-SAN'S WHEREABOUTS.

NO...IF I'M FOUND OUT... IF I BREAK MY WORD...
IT'S BEST TO DO NOTHING...
.....
BUT...STAYING PUT WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING...
WHAT IF...

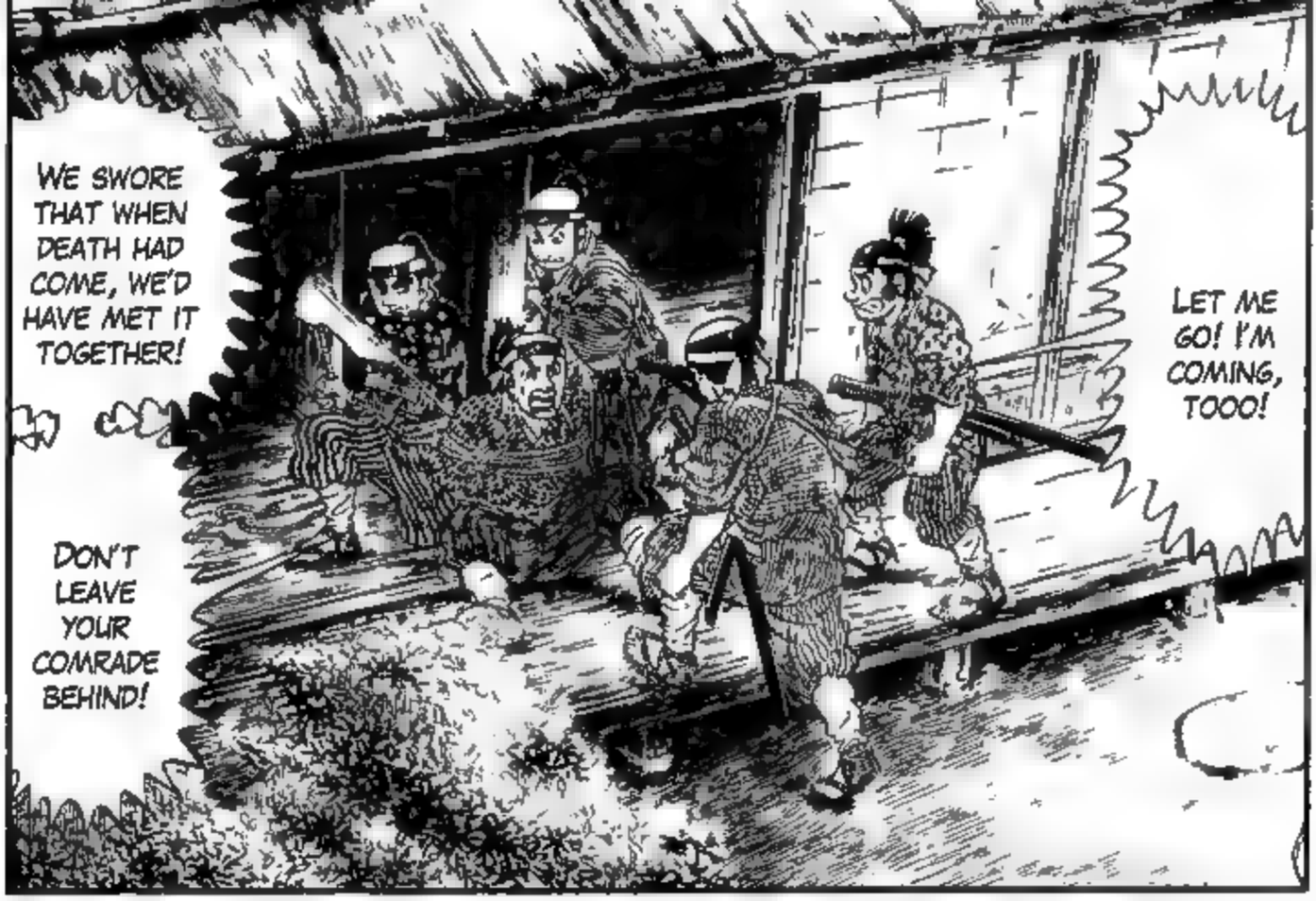
WHAT'S WROOOONG? WHY DON'T YA TRY AND COME CLOSER!?
HEY-HEEEY!
UGAAH !!!!
ズッ

LORD MURAKI!
AAH!

FUHAHA
C'MON! C'MERE!
LORD TAKI-GAWA!
LORD TAKANO!

ガ

I BEG YOOOU! I...
HEY, GO BACK TO THE SHED AND COME BACK WITH ROPE!
I'M COMING, TOO! DON'T LEAVE ME BEHIND!


WE SWORE THAT WHEN DEATH HAD COME, WE'D HAVE MET IT TOGETHER!
LET ME GO! I'M COMING, TOOO!
DON'T LEAVE YOUR COMRADE BEHIND!

TAKE ME WITH YOOOU!
WHEN YOU DIE, I WANT TO DIE AT YOUR SIDE!

YOU HAVE TO LIVE FOR SHINO-DONO!
KENNOSUKE! WE CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO DIE!

DO YOU WANT TO ABANDON SHINO-DONO!

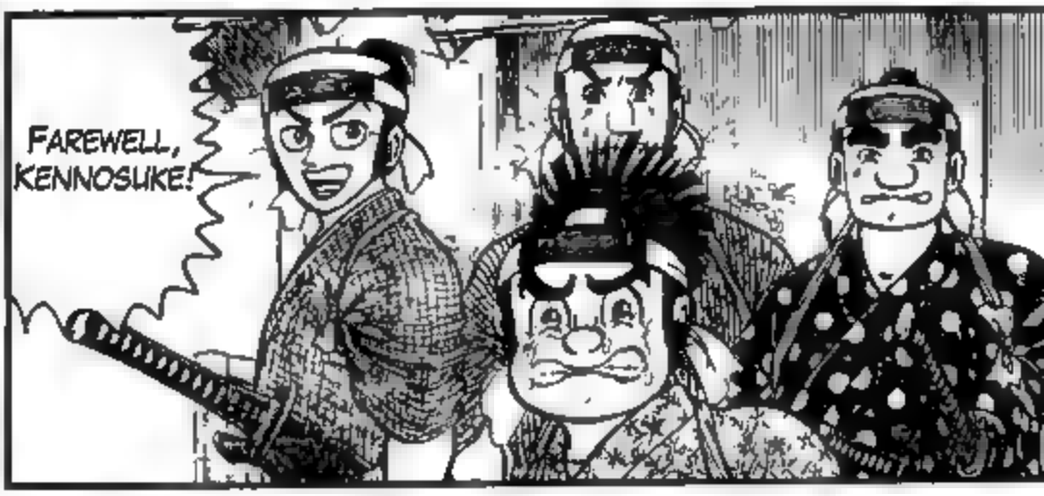
YOU MUST LIVE ON AND PROTECT SHINO-DONO!
NO MATTER WHAT LIFE YOU'LL KNOW WHEN THIS DOMAIN CRUMBLES,
.....
.....
.....
.....

.....
PROTECT HER!
PROTECT OUR BELOVED SHINO-DONO!

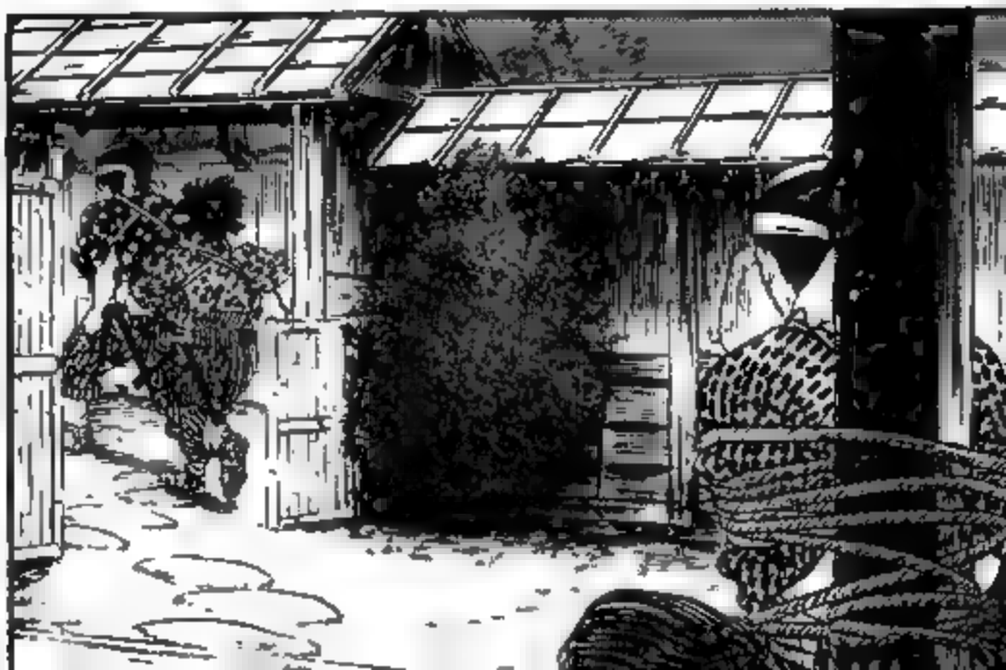
UUUGH!
OOH!
LET'S GO!

HIKOMA!
JOTARO!
KANZA-EMON!
BUNZO!

.....


FAREWELL, KENNOSUKE!

NGH!



UOOOH! SHINO-DONOOO!!!

FUHAHAHA... THOSE MEN CAME PREPARED TO MEET DEATH, BUT...
SEEMS THAT SEEING OUR HANGING HOSTAGES HAS DISHEARTENED THEM!

OUR FIGHT IS TOMORROW!
TOMORROW, THE GOLD'S PROC-ESSION WILL COME!
LIKELY ...
THAT SHOULD BE THEIR FINAL RESIST-ANCE.

OUR DECISIVE BATTLE!
TOMORROW! AT LAST!

THEY'VE MADE A CHARGE?

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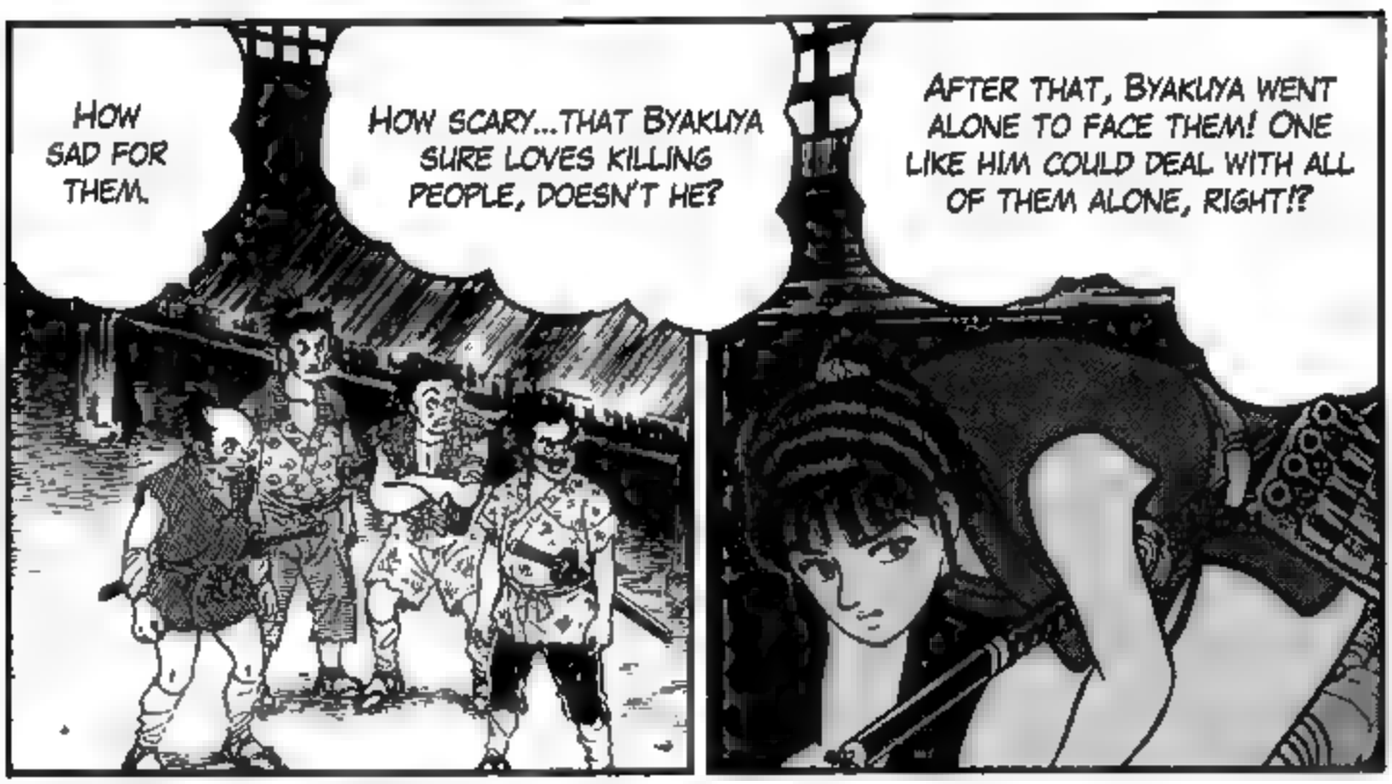
OUR HOSTAGE WAS TOTALLY SPITTED!
ONE GOT SKEWERED! BYAKUYA CUT A ROPE!
WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE FRONT!?


HOW SAD FOR THEM.
HOW SCARY...THAT BYAKUYA SURE LOVES KILLING PEOPLE, DOESN'T HE?
AFTER THAT, BYAKUYA WENT ALONE TO FACE THEM! ONE LIKE HIM COULD DEAL WITH ALL OF THEM ALONE, RIGHT!?

THAT PAIR OF WOMEN?
DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THOSE HOSTAGES AT THE FUKUCHIYA?
HE'S NOT JUST SCARY... HE'S JUST... CREEPY...
BYAKUYA'S SCARY, BUT FOR ME? SEIRYU'S SCARIER!

YOU KNOW SEIRYU...
FUKU-CHIYA...
AAHHH! IT'S THE INN WHERE BISHAMON-TEN AND THE OTHERS ARE STAYING!
ONE WAS DRESSED LIKE A WOMAN, BUT SHE WAS ACTUALLY A MAN!
A MAAAN? NO LIE?
IT'S KIKU!

NOW'S THE TIME! WHILE THEY'RE SHORTHANDED! I'LL GO SAVE THEM!
I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE!
AHHH! HEY LOOK OVER THERE!
OHH!

!!
LOOK OUT! IT'S A RAAAID!
A RAID FROM THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE!

OOOOH! THEY'VE COME FROM OUR SIDE, TOO!

おおおお

IDIOTS!!

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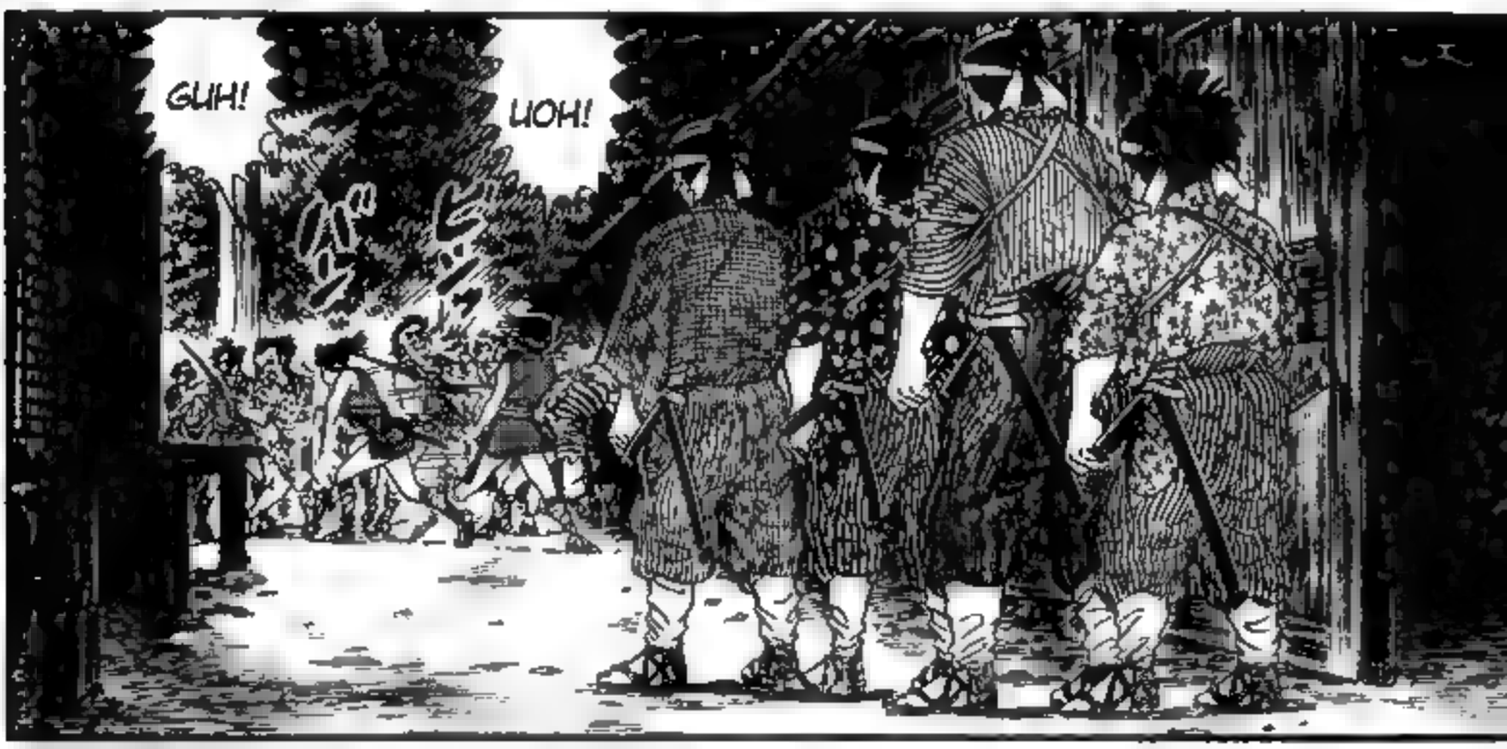
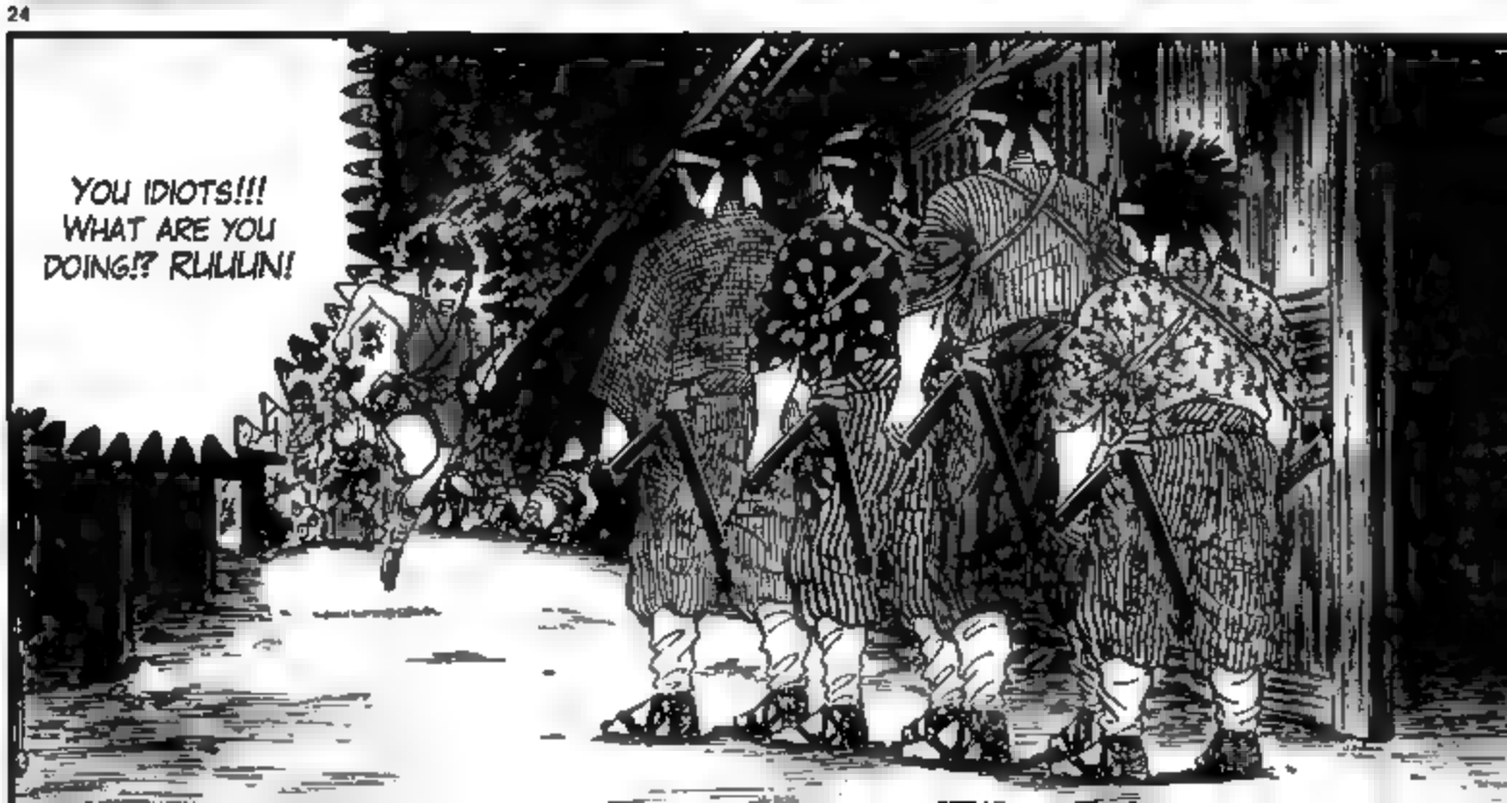
AZUMI !!!
HURRY!
WHO IS THIS GIRL!?
TO THE BACK! HURRY!
THIS WAY!!

RIFLE SQUAD, THIS WAY! COME THIS WAY!!

GET OUT!
HURRY UP!!!


GUH!
UOH!

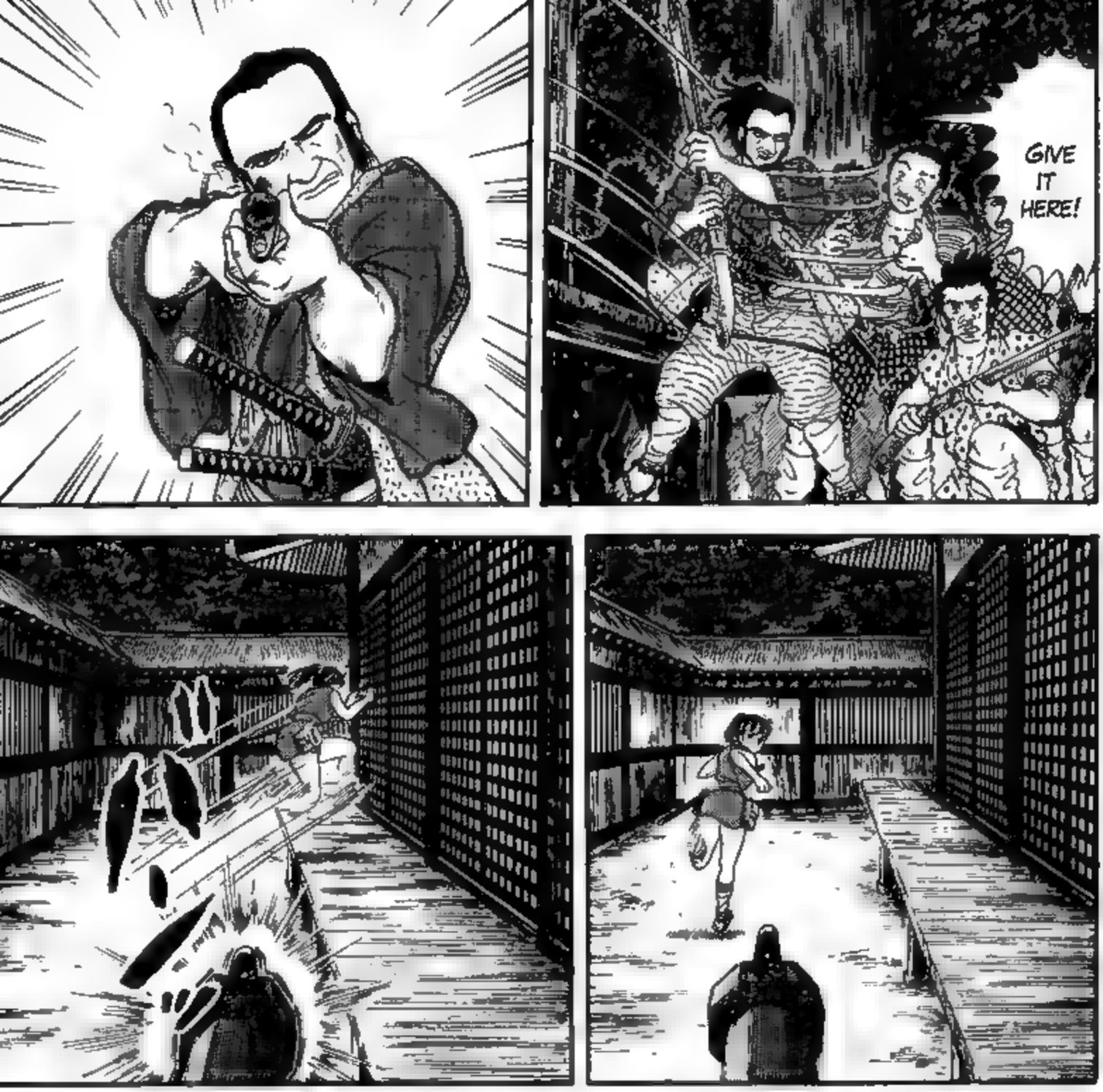

YOU IDIOTS!!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? RUILIN!

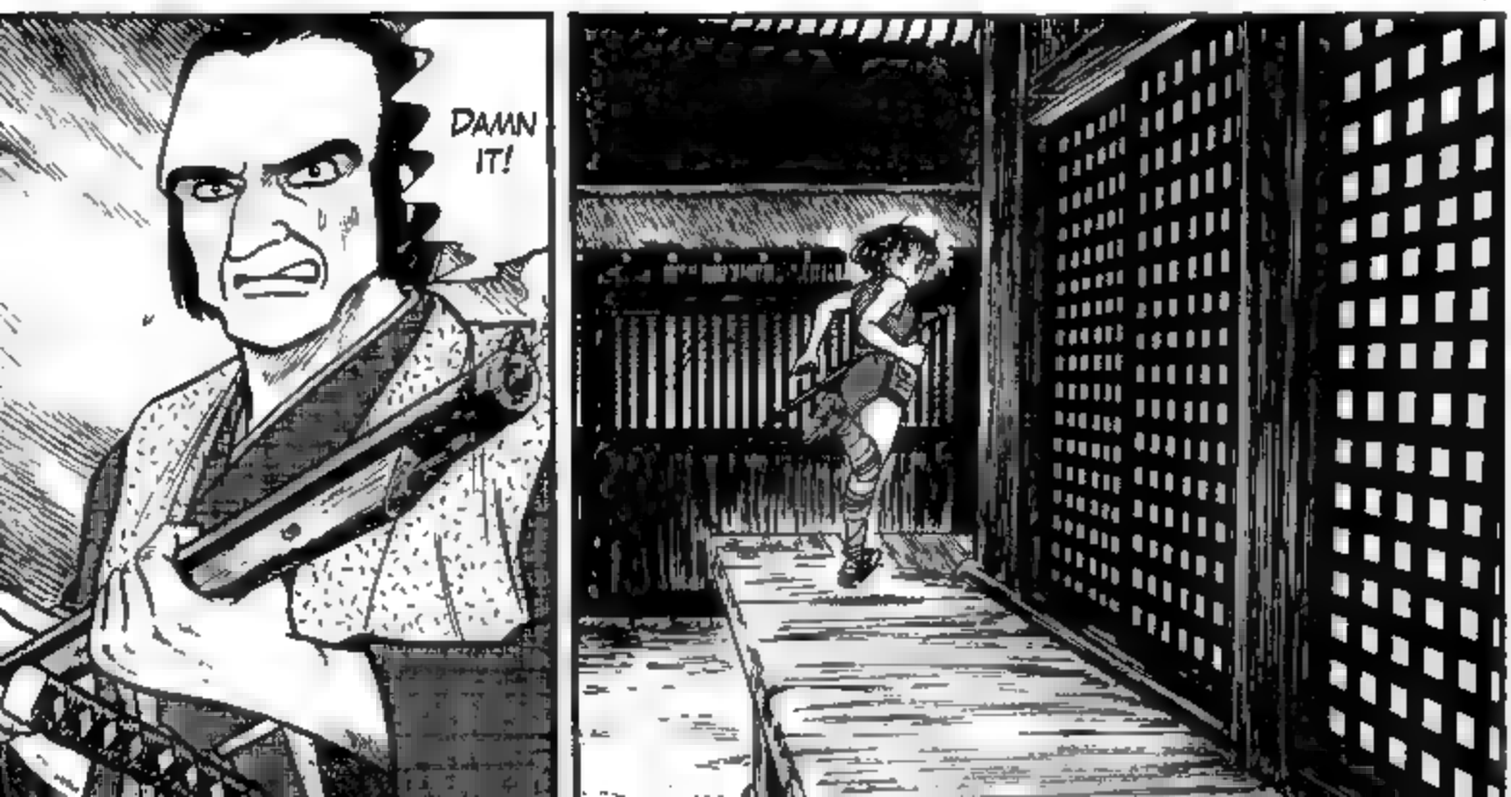
GUNMEN, MAKE HASTE!!

FIRE AT THAT YOUNG GIRL!

FIRE!! FIRE!!

HURRY UP AND FIRE!
KIKU!! I'M ON MY WAY!


GIVE IT HERE!


DAMN IT!

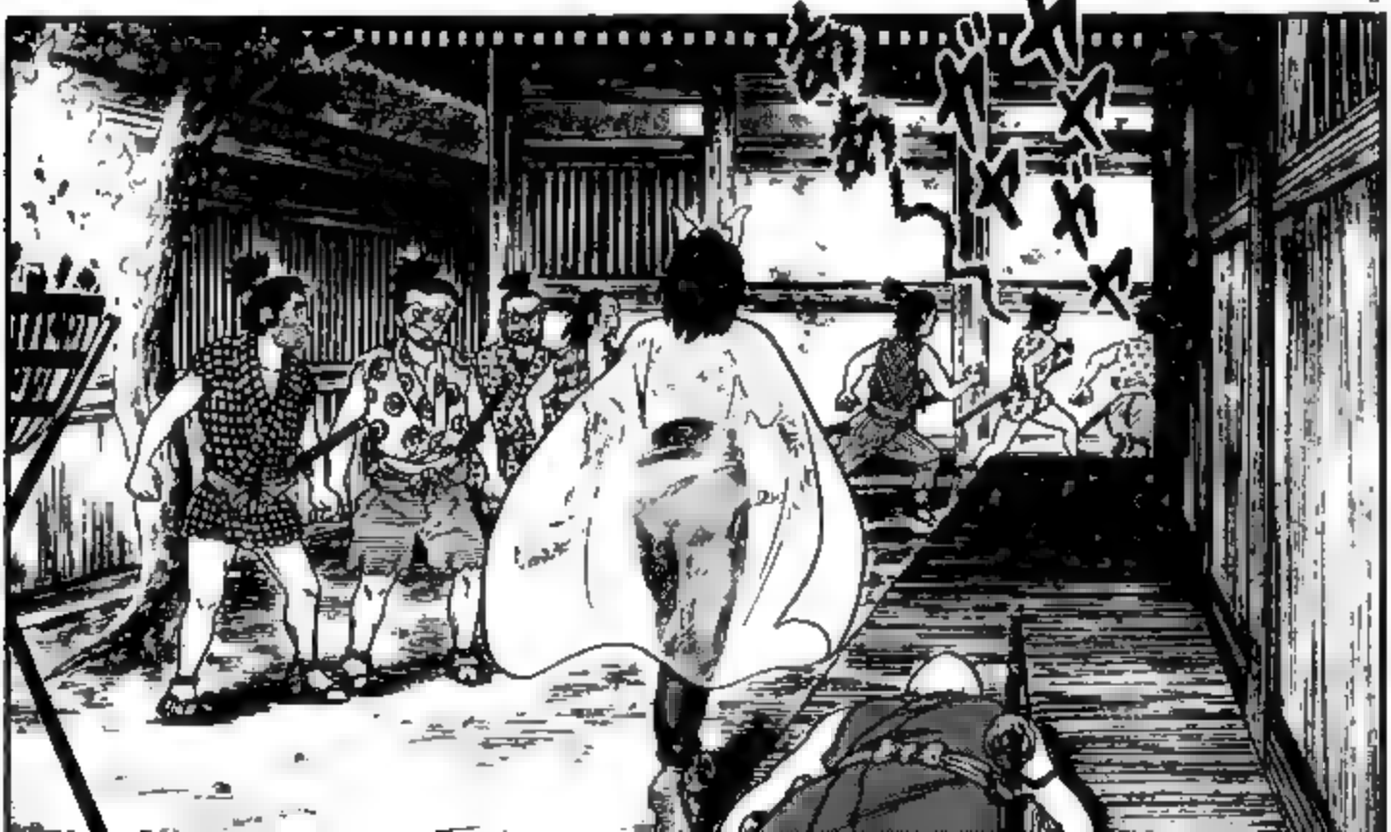
CHAPTER 5: EACH AND EVERYONE'S HARDSHIPS

SO THIS IS THE LASS THE YAGYU ARE IN SUCH A FRENCY OVER..?

2

SQUEEEEZE!
むぎゅっ!!
HOW SPLENDID...!

WHAT'S ALL THIS RUCKUS?
W-WHO KNOWS!?
WATCH OVER THIS WOMAN!



LORD BYAKUYA IS USING FIRE TO-
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

4

DIDN'T YOU COME HERE TO DIE?!
WHY DO YOU RUN AWAY!?
COME OVER HERE!!!
あああ

I ASKED WHY YOU AREN'T COMING TO ME!!!
.....
IF YOU DON'T ...

SO JEALOUS...
SHE GONNA BE LORD BISHAMONTEN'S FEAST..?
WHAT A FINE WOMAN...

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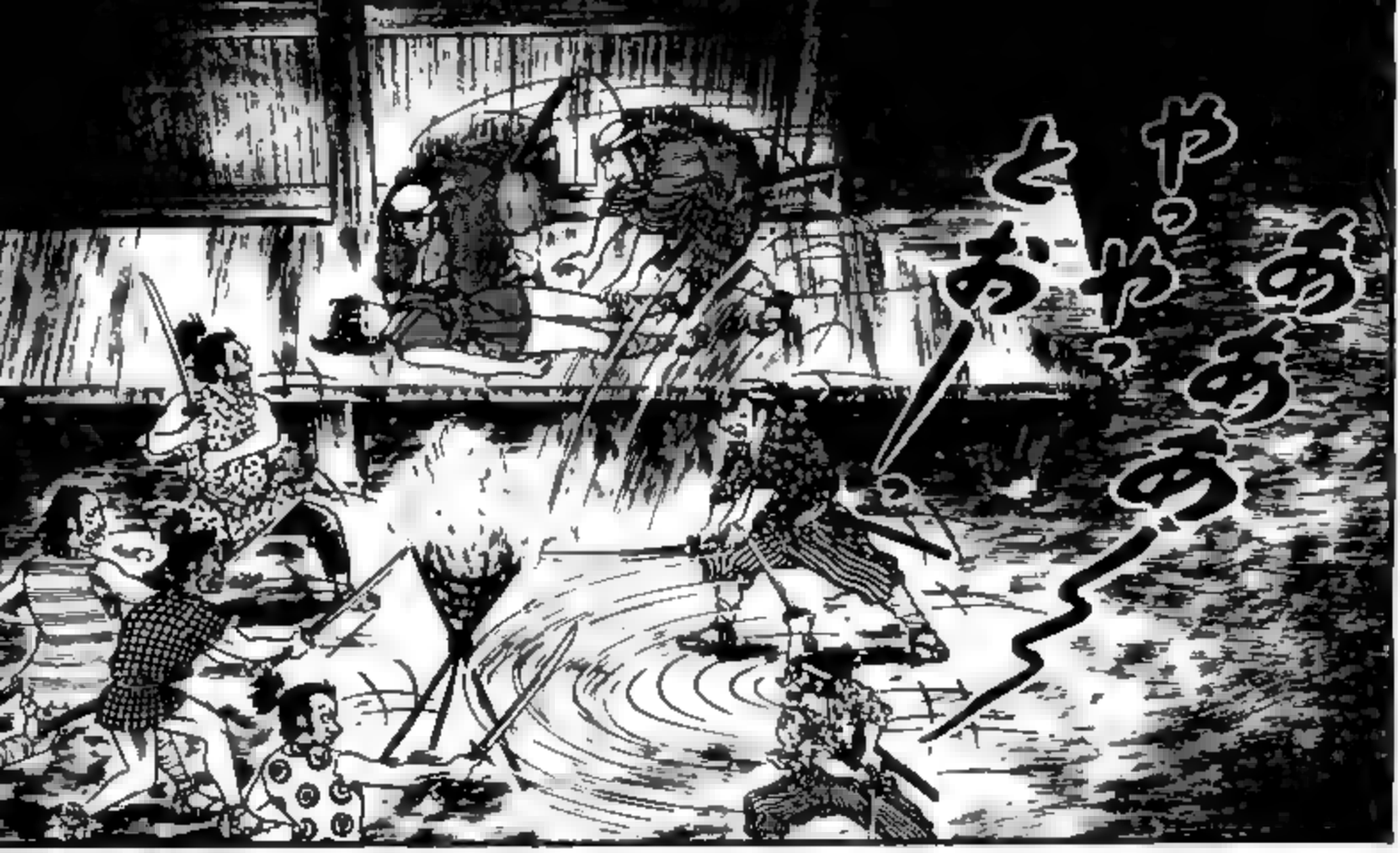
WAH!!
WAH!!!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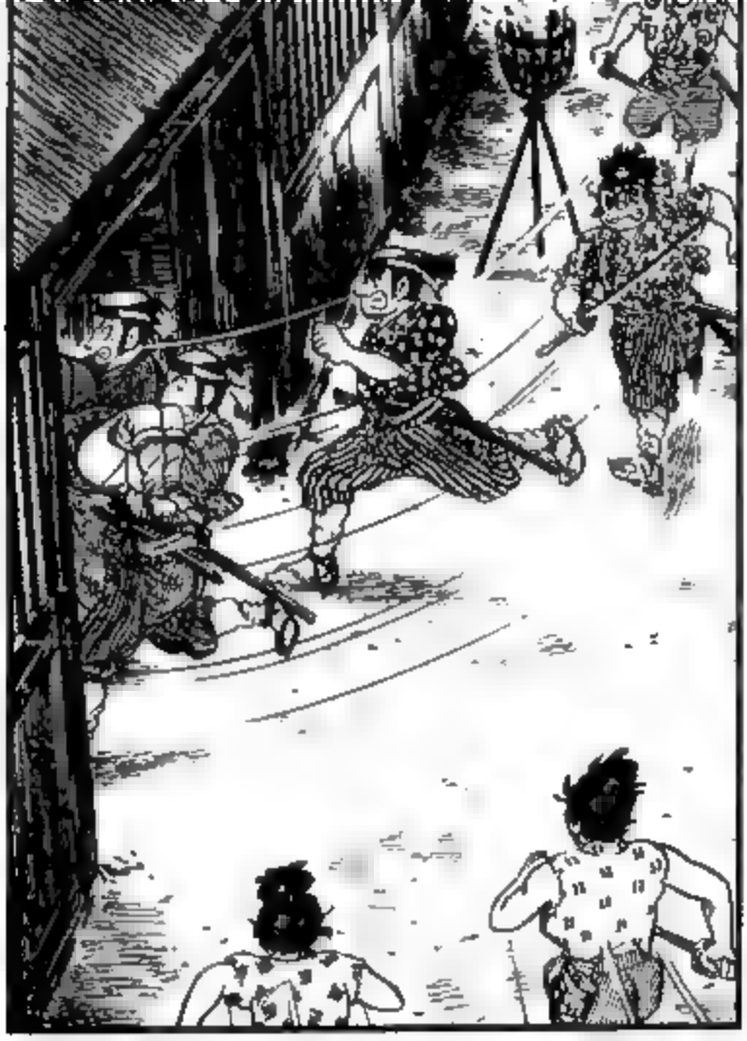
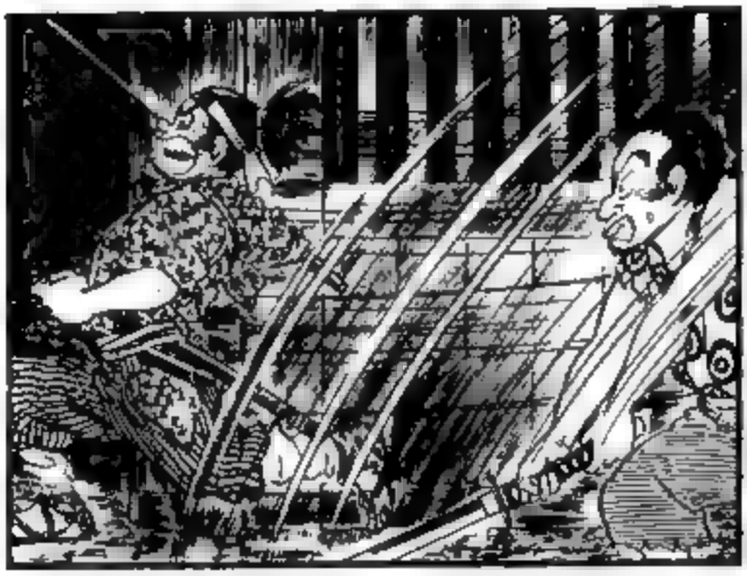
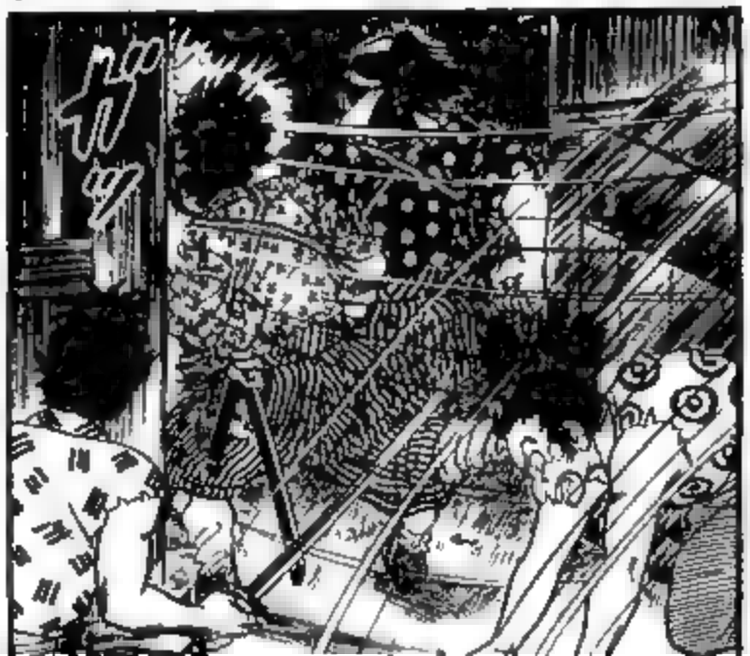





HEY!
THIS
WAY!!

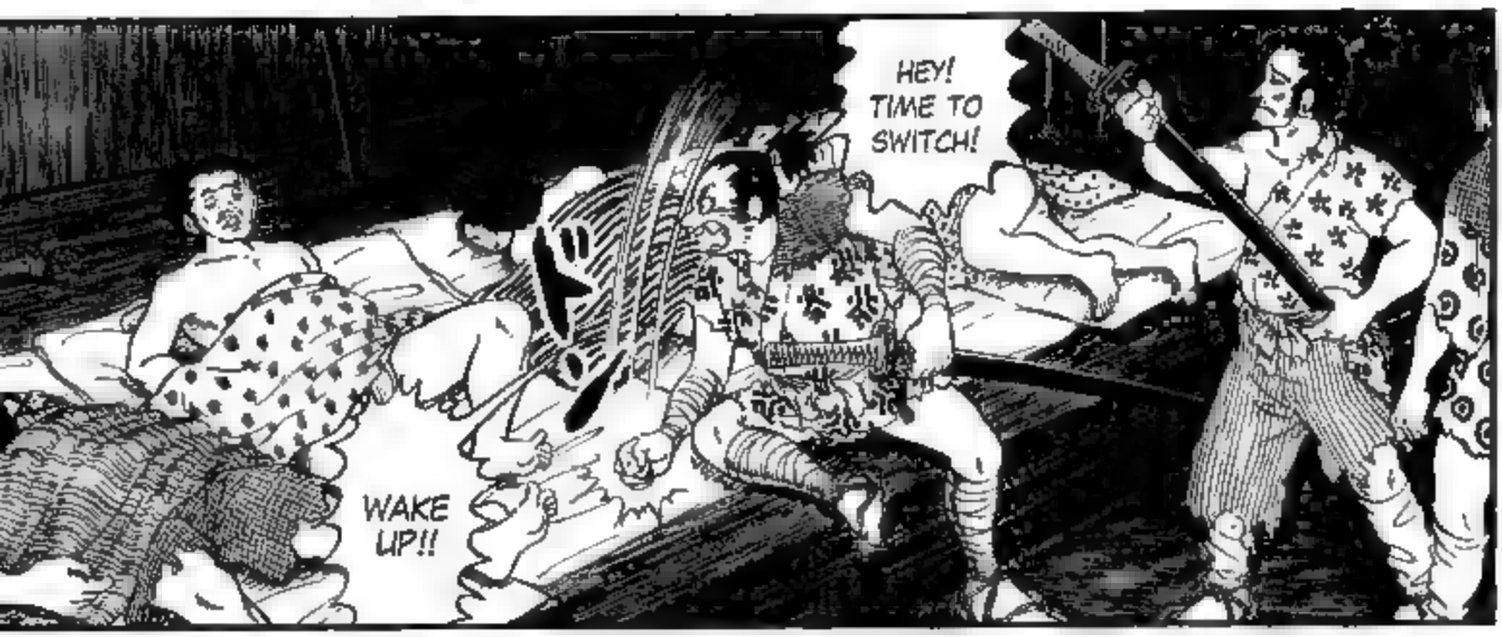
DON'T
LET THEM
TAKE THAT
WOMAN!!
HEY!
THIS
WAY!!

LET'S GO!!!
OHH!!

DAMN !!!
ズザッ
バササッ
バキキッ
FOLLOW THEM AND CATCH HER!
ド!
ド!

W-WE GOTTA RUN!!
THEY'RE COMING AFTER US!

HERE THEY COME!
WE'RE DEAD MEN IF WE FAIL!
CATCH THEM AT ALL COSTS!!!
ハッ


HEY! TIME TO SWITCH!
WAKE UP!!

WATCH CLOSE! WE'LL LEAVE THE TOKUGAWA SPEECHLESS!

IT'S SO EXCIT-ING!!!
THIS'S FOR THE YEARS OF ALL OUR RESENTMENT TO THE DAMN TOKUGAWA!

YEAH...GOLD BARS, HUH?
WHEN NIGHT SOON DAWNS.. IT'LL BE OUR DECISIVE BATTLE!

YEAH! A REAL BATTLE!
A BATTLE, EH?
YEP. IT'LL BE RISKY.
SINCE IT'S THE SHOGUNATE'S GOLD...THE GUARDS'LL HAVE SOME SKILL.

Y'GOT THAT RIGHT!
I AIN'T GONNA DIE...

OOOH!
SHOULD WE HAVE A WOMAN?
ガラ
ビリッ
ビリッ

COME!

YOUR SHIFT!
キョン
キョン
WAKE UP!
SEIRYU! IT'S TIME TO CHANGE SHIFTS!

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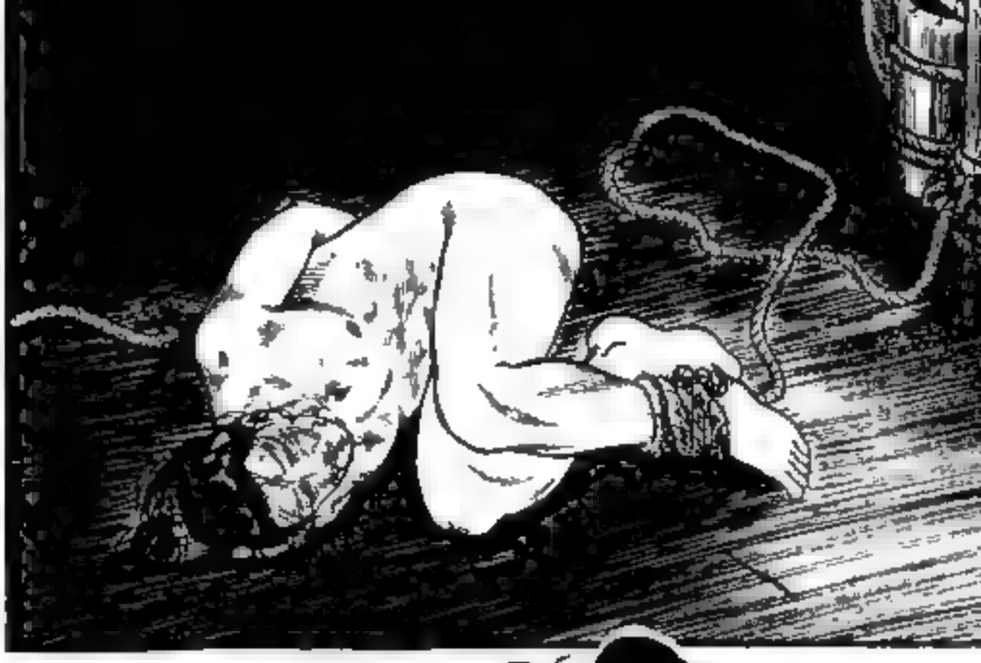
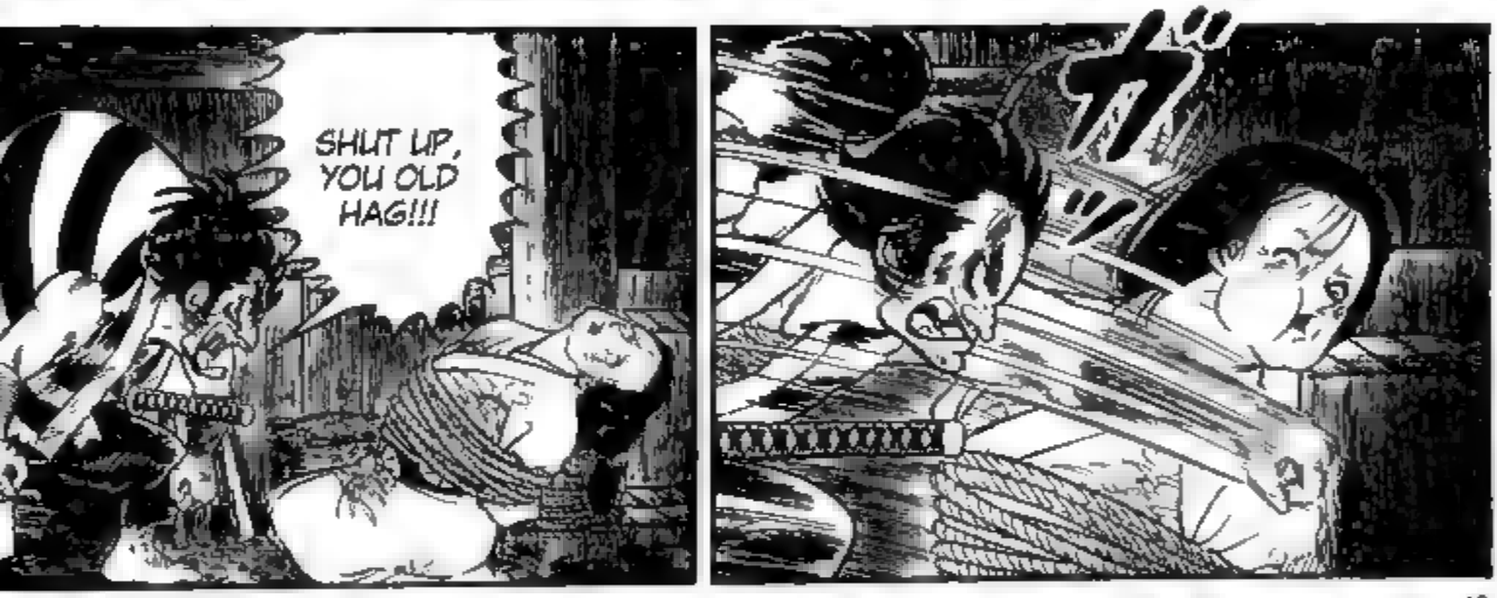
ハア
ブル
ブル



ARE YOU SUFFERING? DOES IT HURT...?
OH, HOT, HOT, HOT...

PLEASE STOP! SHOW SOME MERCY! JUST LET HIM SLEEP!
PLEASE! YOU CAN SEE HE HAS A HIGH FEVER! HE'S SHAKING!

STOOOOOP!!!!
GIIIHEH!
NOW I'LL MAKE YOU FEEL SO GOOD...


SHUT UP, YOU OLD HAG!!!

HOW IS IT?
HOW IS IT?

AZUMIII
...
AZUMI
...
YOU'RE MY SAVIOR!
WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOG-ETHER!

ARE YOU ALRIGHT, KIKU?
WHAT'S WRONG, KIKU?

AH...
I'LL
...

.....

I WANNA SEE YOOOOU...
AZUMIIII...

I'LL SUCK IT FOR YOU ...
MAKE YOU FEEL...
A LOT BETT-ER...
HM?
.....
.....
I'LL DO IT REAL WELL...
.....

NONE OF YOUR TRICKS WITH ME!
YOU WERE GONNA TRY TO BITE IT OFF, HUH?

ボッゴッ
WHAT HAPP-ENED!?
HE TRY TO BITE IT OFF!?!?!

バキッ
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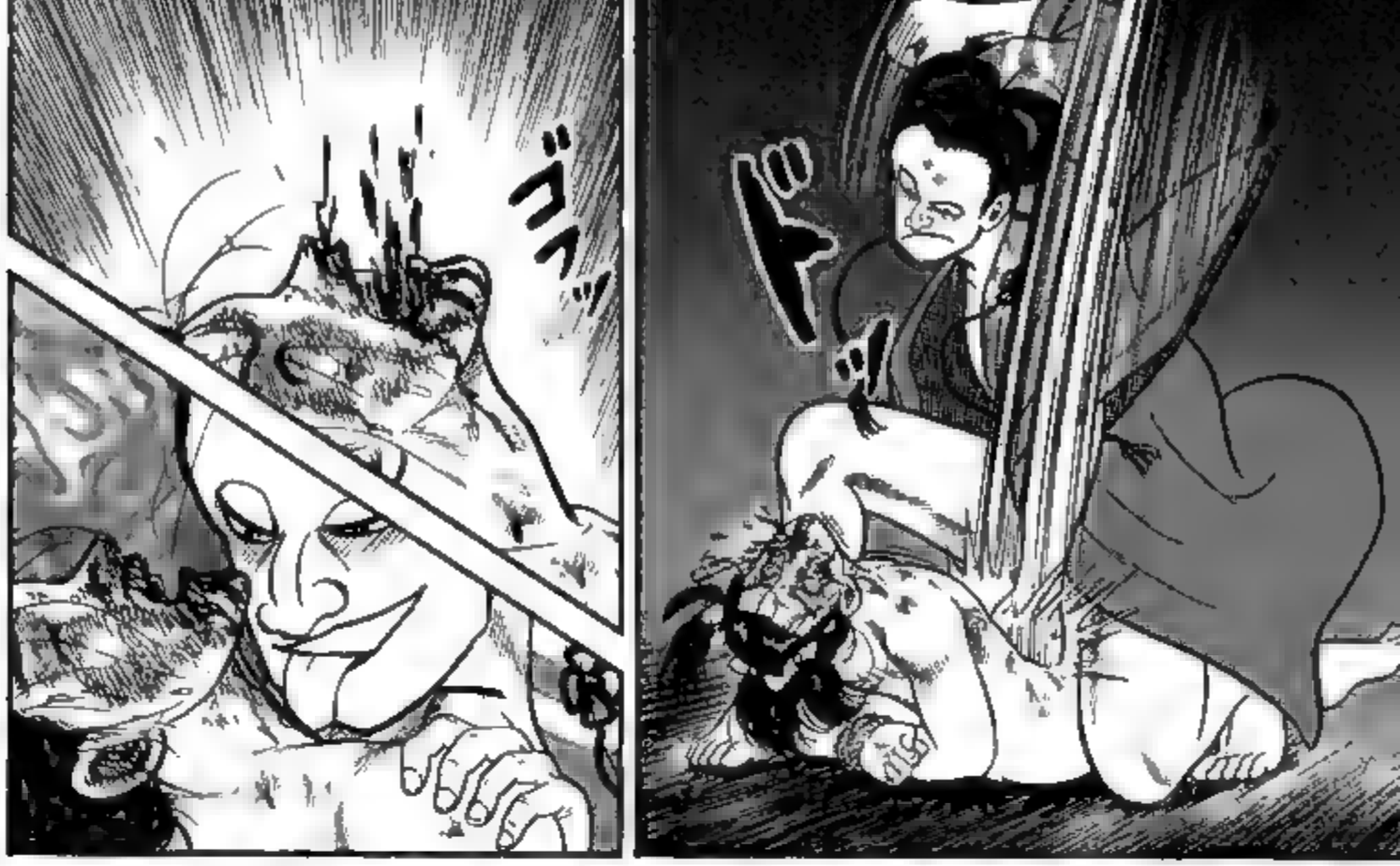
BASTARD !!!!!
DAMNED BAST-ARD!!!

ド!!

KIKU...
FORGIVE ME....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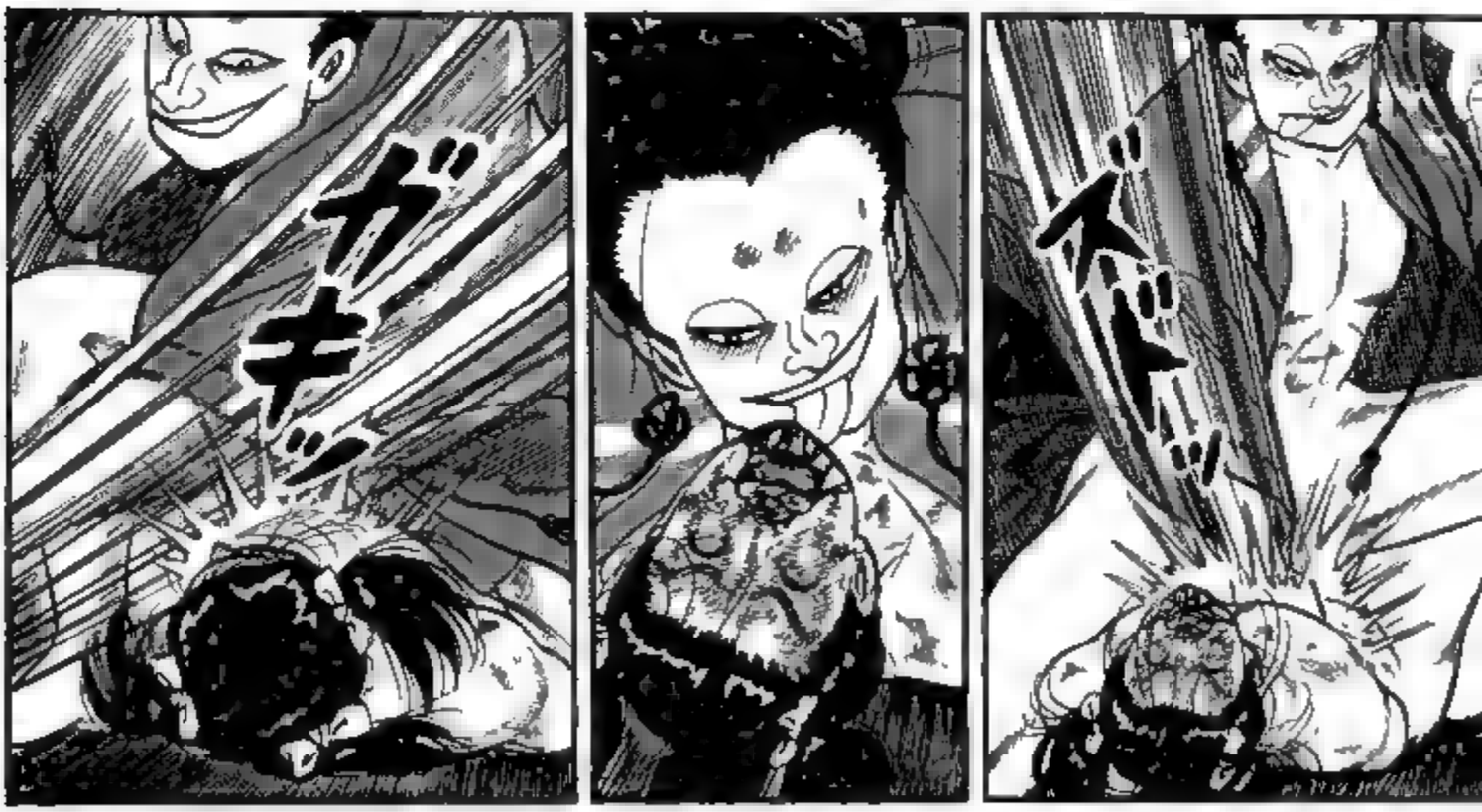
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A....
AZUMI!!!
I'LL...
BE KILLED!

AZUMI!!!
KIKU!!
KIKU!

I'LL PROTECT YOU, KIKU!!
REALLY!?
WE'LL ALWAYS TRAVEL TOGETHER!
I WANNA LIVE WITH YOU, AZUMI!!!!!!
HELP MEEEE!

MAYBE WE LOST 'EM?
CAN'T SEE THEM..

AZUMI-SAN IS TOTALLY OUT COLD!
WHAT DO WE DO?

IF WE GET SOME WATER AND SPLASH IT ON HER, SHE'LL WAKE UP!

GOOD POINT.
WE CAN'T GO AROUND SEARCHING FOR WATER...WE COULD BE SPOTTED BY THEM...FOR NOW, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO NOT GO OUT...

IF SHE WAKES UP... SHE'LL GO BACK... THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT!
ALSO...

AZUMI DESPERATELY WANTS TO RESCUE KENNOSUKE-SAN'S MOTHER.. AND KIKU-SAN!

SO ABSURD... TRYING TO DO IT ALL ALONE!
IT'S UNREASON-ABLE...
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S A WOMAN, SHE'S TRYING TO SAVE THEM SO DESPERATELY...

IT WOULD BE...
YEAH...
...HOWEVER, WHEN IT'S OVER...WON'T THEY RELEASE THE HOSTAGES!?...WOULDN'T BE BETTER FOR AZUMI-SAN TO REMAIN UNCONSCIOUS LIKE THIS UNTIL THAT HAPPENS...?
.....
.....

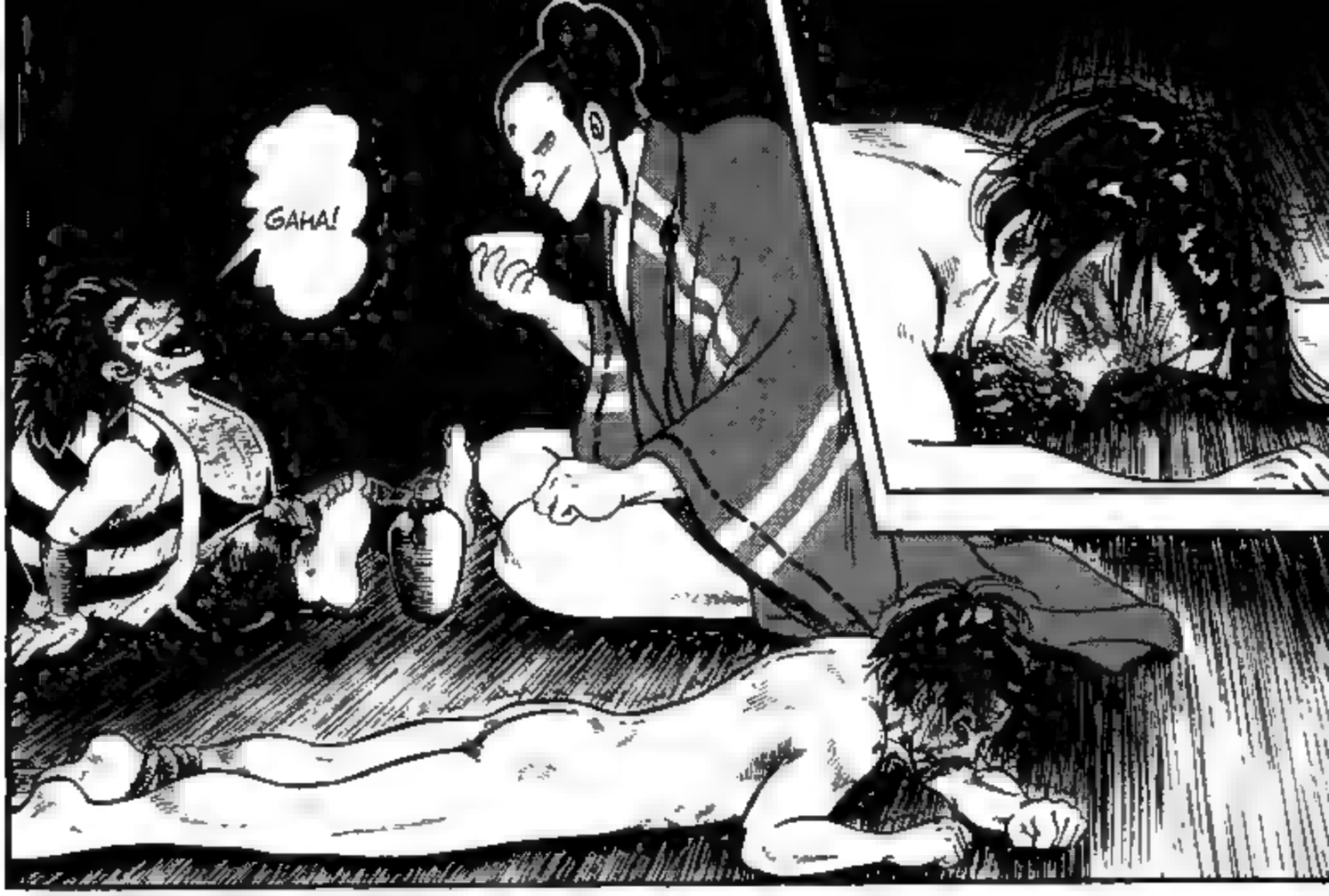
UNTIE THESE ROPES, SHINO-DONO.
I BEG OF YOU.
.....
PLEASE EAT YOUR FOOD.
HERE!

AAAAAH!
BY NOW, THEY'RE ALL ALREADY...
SO I REFUSE...

.....
AM I WRONG?
IF I DO THAT YOU WILL DIE.

.....
I WOULD DIE AS WELL!!!

IF YOU SHOULD DIE...


GAHA!

KAHAHAHA!

……

HE'S HAVING CONVULSIONS!
OHHH! WHAT AN AMAZING SOUND!!
……!!
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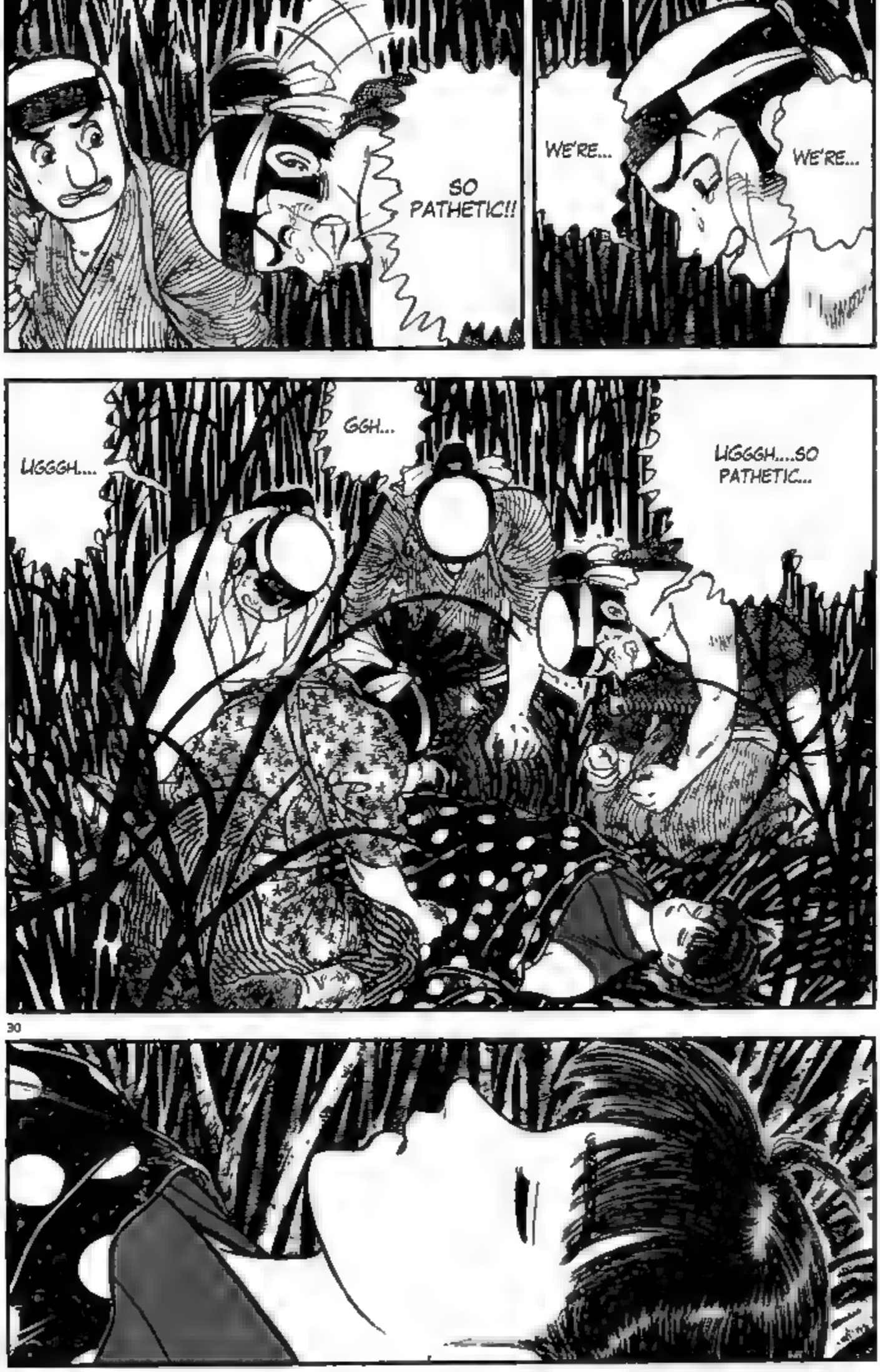

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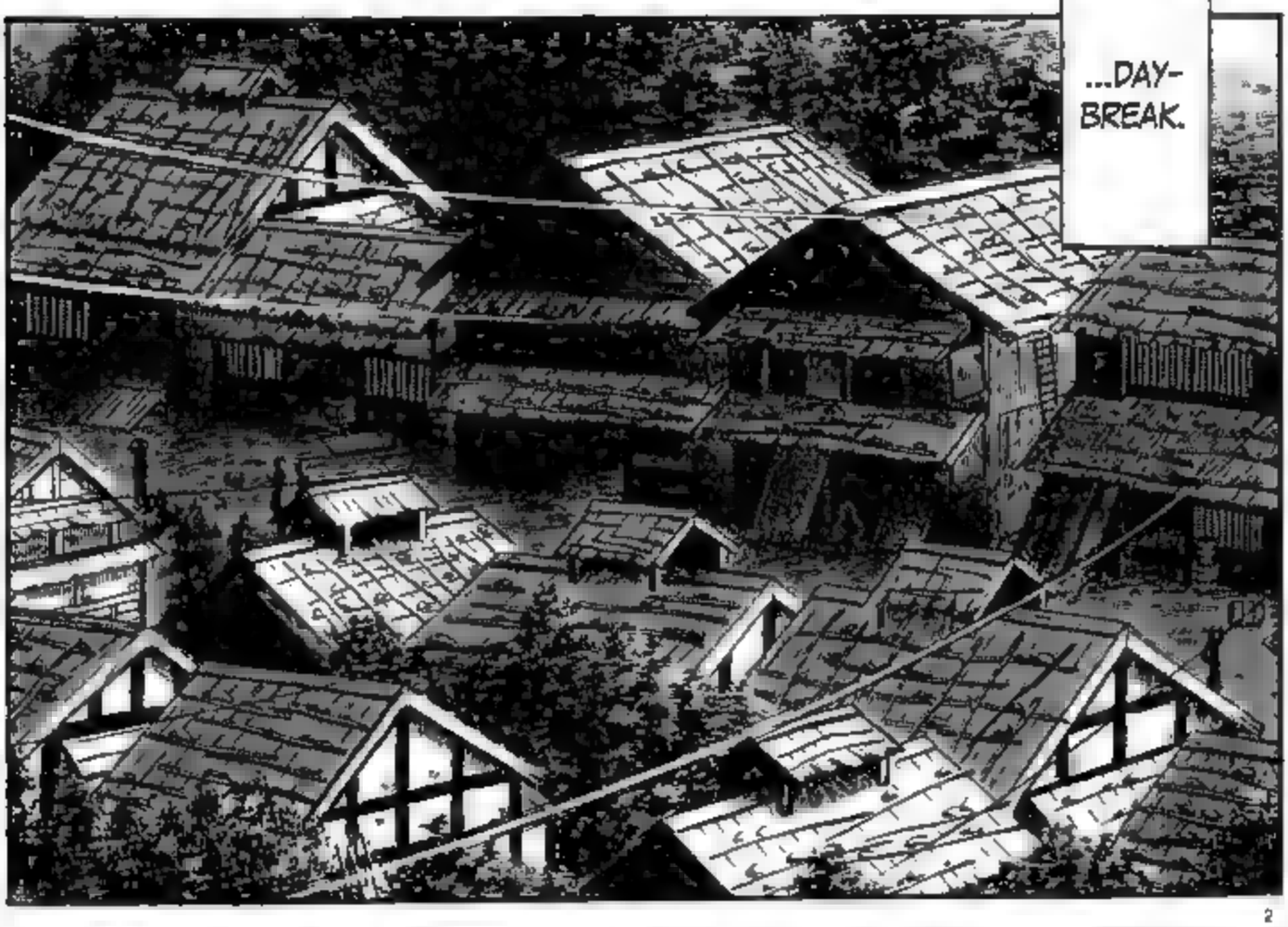
THE RULER'S SELF INTEREST
第六話
天下の私欲


...DAY-
BREAK.

YEAH!
AT
LAST...

SOMEHOW, IT APPEARS THE PROCESSION THEY'RE TARGETING WILL COME TODAY.
YES. IT DOES SEEM SO.

JUST A BIT OF PATIENCE.
THAT SHOULD BE THE CASE...
IF THEY STEAL THE GOLD, THEY'LL TAKE THEIR LEAVE OF THE POST TOWN, RIGHT?

I COULD NOT SAVE HEEER!

THEY VIOLATED MY WIFE! MADE HER THEIR TOY!
GO AWAY YOU SAY?

MY DAUGHTER WAS A PURE MAIDEN NOT EVEN FIFTEEN YEARS OLD!!!
SHE WAS AN OLD, USED UP WOMAN!

STOP!
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?
HOW CAN YOU EVEN KNOW IF SHE WAS REALLY A MAIDEN!?!
STOP IT!

SHIT!
UGH!

WE CANNOT HAVE MORE VICTIMS THAN THIS!
YOU MUST NOT!

BE BRAVE!
IT'S MY ORDER!
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?

MY LOOORD !!!!
CONFISCATED!
B-BUT...LEAVING THEM TO STEAL THE GOLD...W-WOULD ONLY MEAN ACCEPTING WE HAVE OUR DOMAIN...

RIGHT! ALL OUR LIVES ARE ALREADY-
WHO KNOWS WHAT SORT OF IRRATIONAL ORDERS OUR LORD WILL RECEIVE!
AFTER STEALING OUR LAND
IT'S THE SHOGUN-ATE'S FAULT FOR SUCH A DIRTY PLOT!

I DON'T WANT EVEN A SINGLE ONE OF MY RETAINERS TO THROW HIS LIFE AWAY NOW!
I DON'T...
I... I BEG OF YOU..
YOU MUST NOT!

UUUU...
UGGH..

SAME TIME, EDO.
WITH YAGYU MUNE-NORI
SECOND SHOGUN HIDE-TADA
RUSHED ON HORSEBACK UNTIL THEY REACHED THE OUTSKIRTS.
FEIGNING AN EARLY MORNING ATTACK,
ALONG WITH JUST A FEW SUBORDINATES,

LADY YODO'S YOUNGER SISTER.
HIDE-TADA'S WIFE WAS
THAT IS, ODA NOBUNAGA'S LITTLE SISTER, LADY OICHI'S DAUGHTER, SEVEN YEARS OLDER THAN HIDETADA.
HIDETADA WAS NO MATCH FOR HIS WIFE, OEYO...IN THE TIME HE HAD BEEN SHOGUN, HE HAD NEVER BEEN ALLOWED A SINGLE CONCUBINE.

...HOWEVER, HIDETADA HAD A SECRET MSTRESS AND AN ILLEGITIMATE CHILD KNOWN ONLY TO MUNENORI AND TO AN EXTREMELY FEW NUMBER OF PEOPLE.

HE BUILT THEM A SPLENDID NEW HOME, APPOINTED THEM GUARDS AND HAD THEM CONTINUE LIVING THERE WITH HIM IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.
ONE DAY, ON AN EARLY-MORNING, HE FELL IN LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT WITH THE DAUGHTER OF A FARMER. SHE WAS A MODERATE AND MEEK WOMAN, THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF HIS WIFE.
YES!
YOUR COMING OF AGE CEREMONY SHALL BE SOON!
BONTEN-MARU!

IS IT TRUE YOU WILL GIFT ME A DOMAIN?
FATH-ER...

I'M NOT GOING TO FORCE YOU TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS FOREVER!
BUT OF COURSE!

WHAT A RARE CHANCE FOR ME!
I'LL MAKE YOU A LORD OF A PROVINCE AND A CASTLE!
TO GO WITH THE CERE-MONY,

I'LL ENTRUST YOU WITH A LARGER ONE!
ONE DAY,
DO WELL, AND..
IT WILL ONLY BE A SMALL ONE AT FIRST...BUT TRY TO RULE IT WELL!

ENDURE IT.
IT'S JUST FOR A BIT LONGER.
TAKING CARE OF BONTENMARU-SAMA CAN BE A CHORE BUT...
YES!

……

WE WEREN'T 'TELLING' ANYTHING!

WHAT WERE YOU TELLING TO MUNE-NORI...?

MUNENORI, THESE FELLOWS ARE FAR TOO TWO-FACED! IT'S TROUBLESOME!

……

11

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キュバ
キュバ

WHO IS HE!?

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チュバ
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ちゃぱ
ちゃぱ
ちゃぱ

YOU MAKE ME FEEL SO AT EASE...
I FEEL AT EASE..
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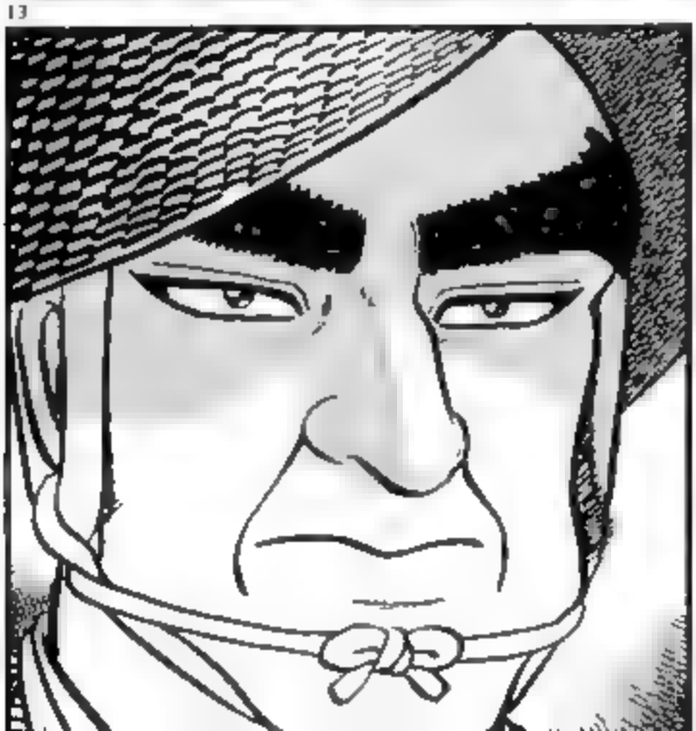
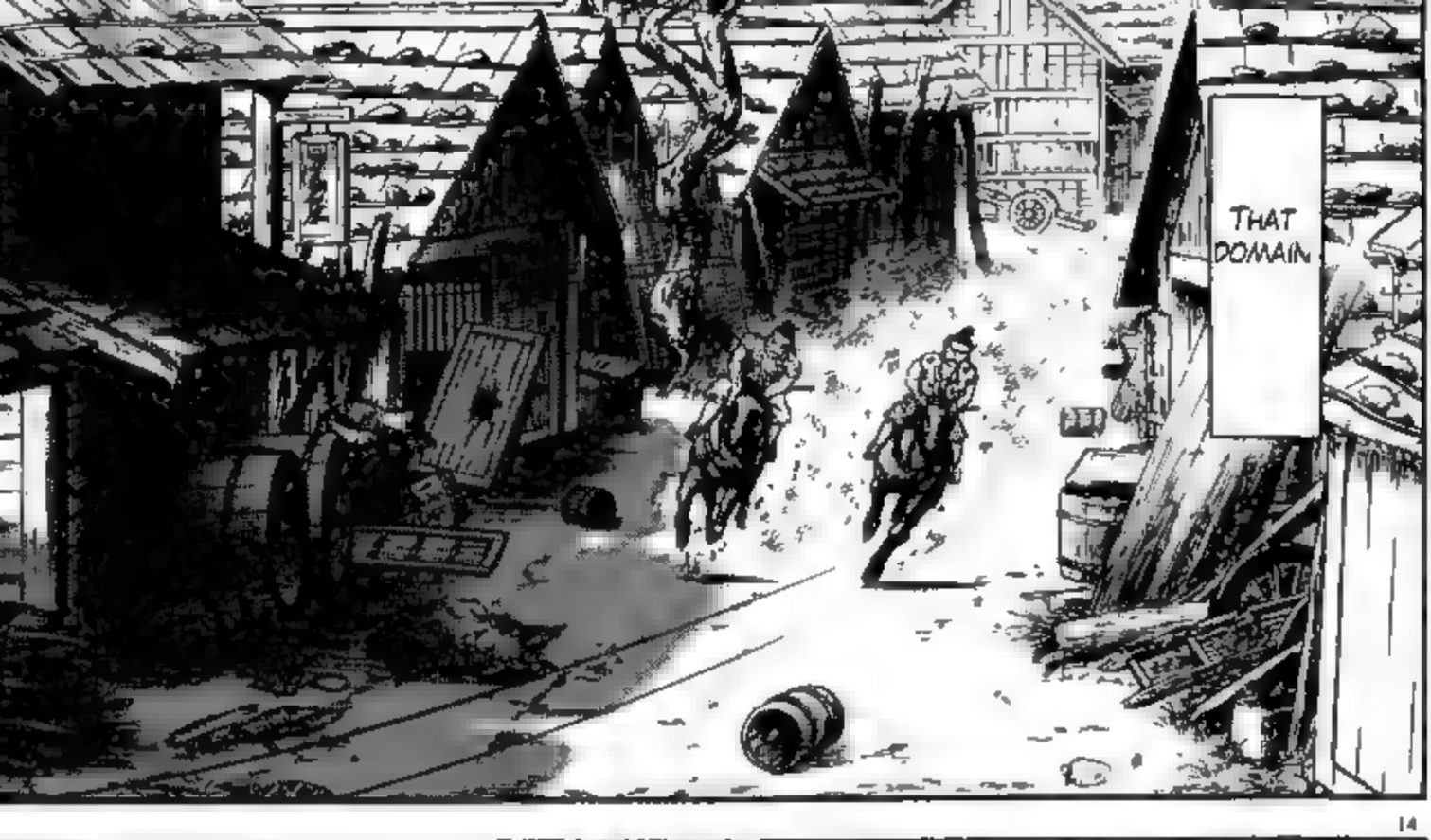
THE MATTER SHOULD BE FINISHED BY MORNING'S END.
YES.
THAT DOMAIN'S RULER WITH NO ISSUE, RIGHT?
WE CAN CHANGE
BONTENMARU WAS SO HAPPY...

TRUST IN ME.
OF COURSE.

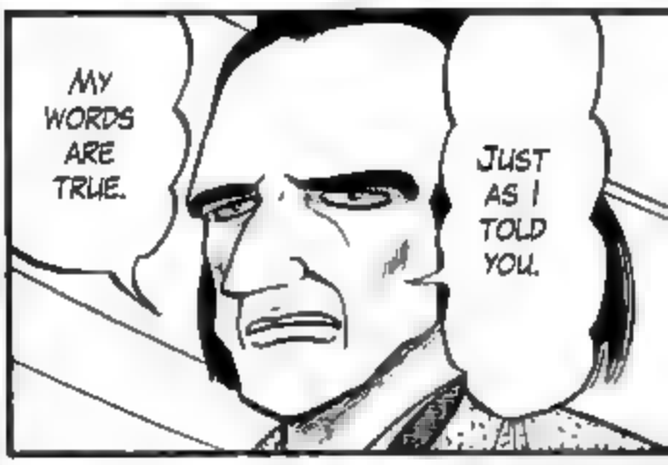
SHALL BE RETURNED IN FULL?
EVEN THE GOLD WE'VE HAD TAKEN,



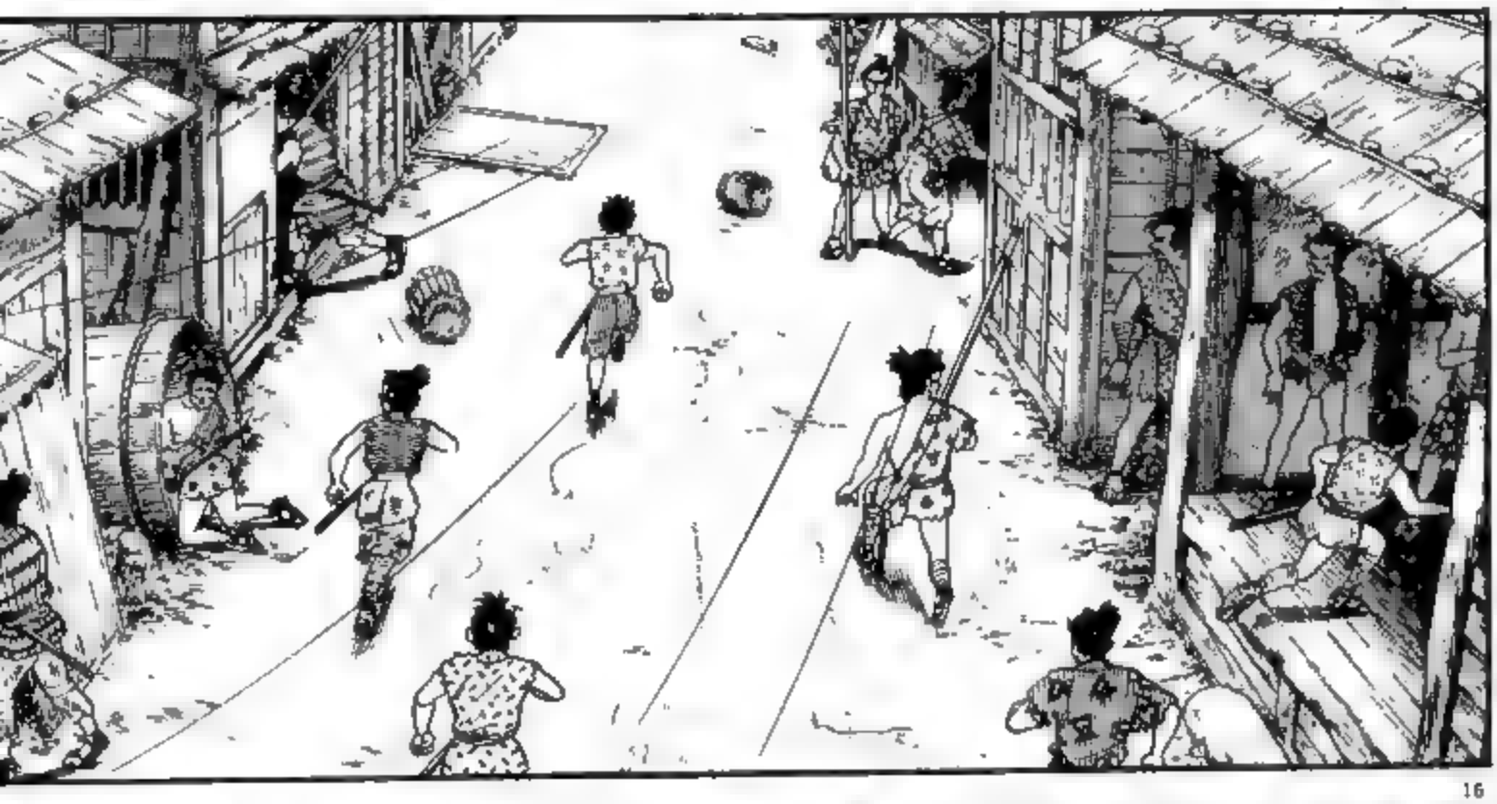

THAT DOMAIN

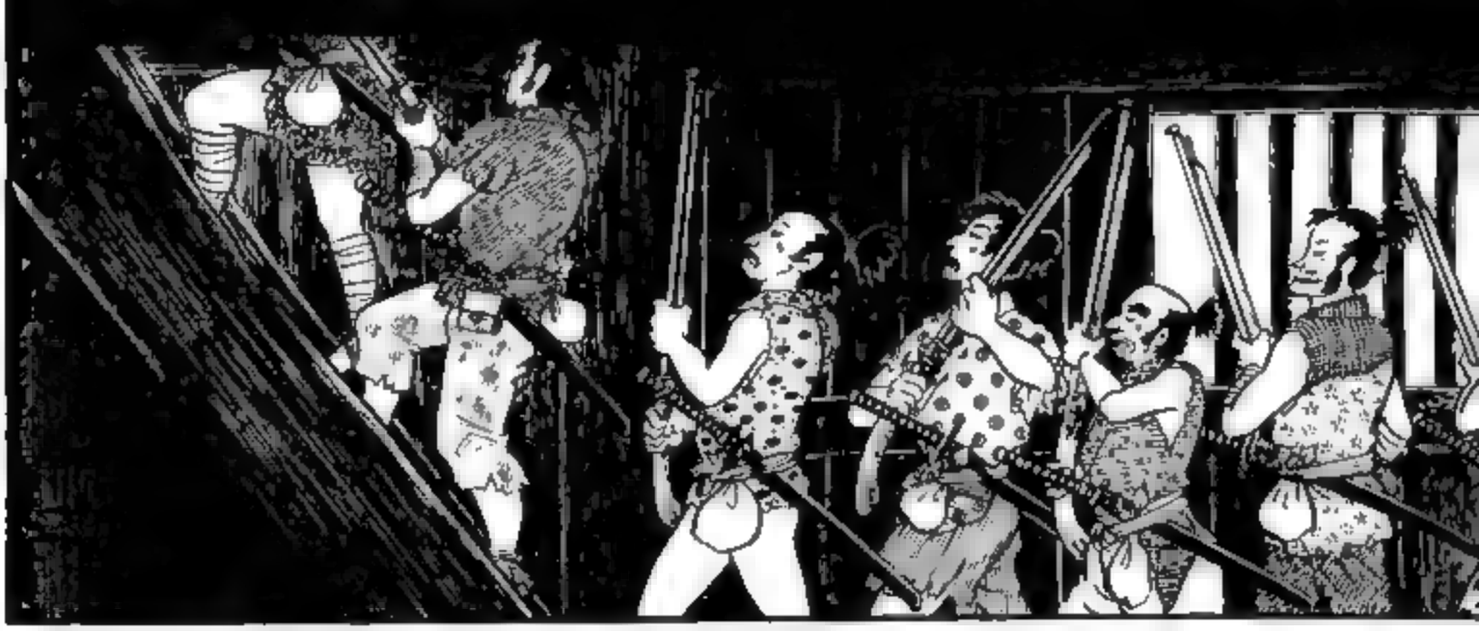
HOW MANY MEN IN THE ESCORT?
WE SPOTTED THE PROCESSION CARRYING THE GOLD!! WE THINK THAT IT'LL ARRIVE HERE IN LESS THAN TWO HOURS!!
ON THE FRONT, FIVE WITH RIFLES, FOURTEEN WITH LONG SPEARS. SURROUNDING THE CART, SIXTEEN MEN WHO WE THINK ARE VETERANS. BEHIND, EIGHT MEN WITH LONG SPEARS!!

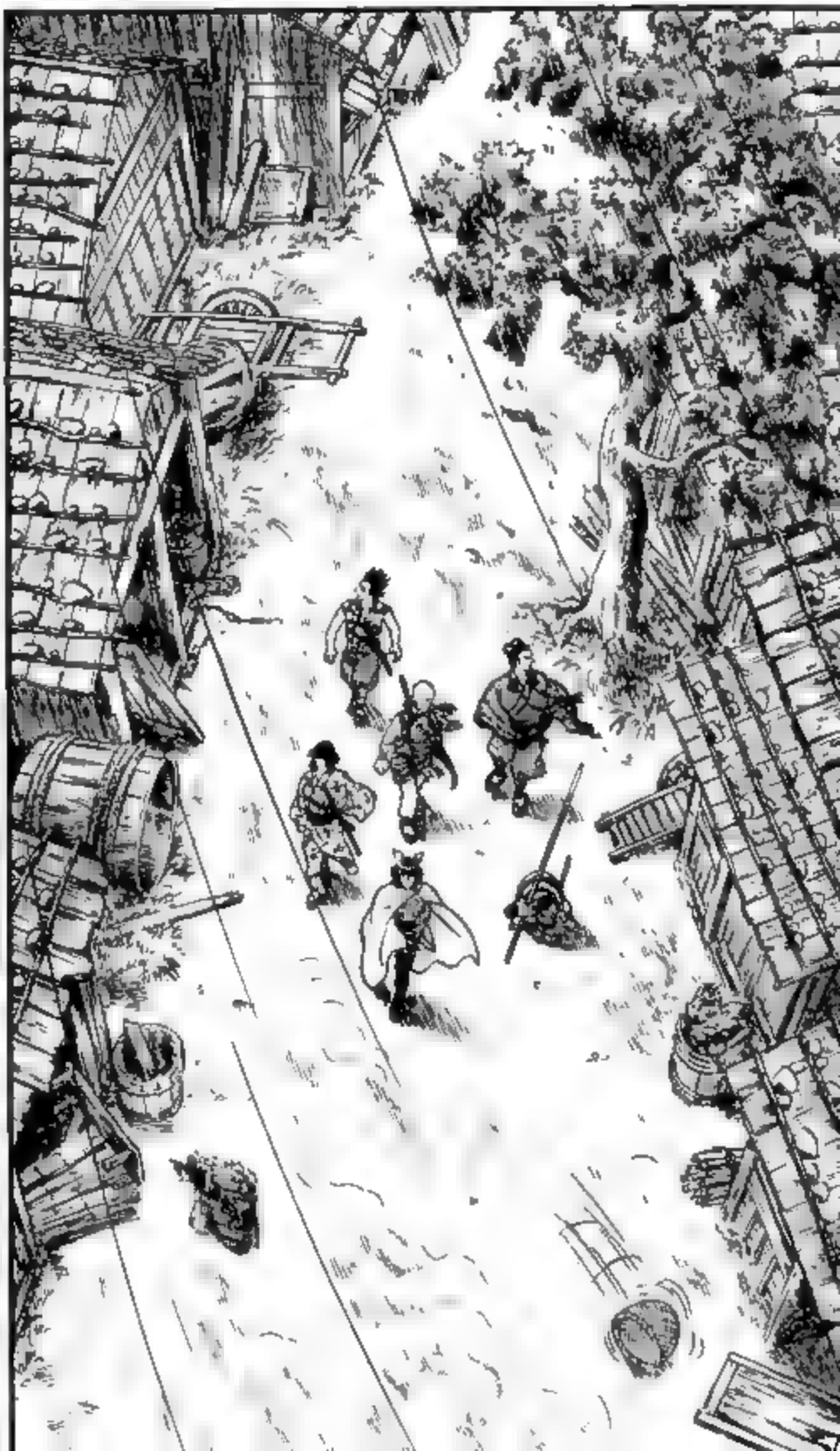
I SEE...NO MORE THAN FORTY, EH?
WASN'T THERE ANOTHER SQUAD?
WE CHECKED FROM THE FRONT TO THE BACK,
BUT WE SAW NONE!


JUST AS I TOLD YOU.
MY WORDS ARE TRUE.

おお
TAKE YOUR POSITIONS AS PLANNED!
IT'S AS YOU HAVE HEARD!!!







GOT IT?
AT MY SIGNAL, FIRE AS ONE!
IDEAL SPOT FOR SNIPING.
YES!
YEAH!

SHOWER THEM WITH OUR BULLETS.
WHEN THEY COME THROUGH HERE,
AFTER WE'VE CUT THEM DOWN A BIT, WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL,
THEN WE STRIKE!

WE'LL SEE A NEW LIGHT IN EVERY-ONE'S EYES!

BUT NOTHING BEATS STEALING THIS MUCH GOLD FROM THAT HATEFUL TOKUGAWA!

IT'S TRUE THERE'S THE WEALTH...

IT'S ALRIGHT.

GOT THE PLAN?

19

IS A FIGHT AGAINST SAKAKURA AND WHOEVER THEY SEND AFTER US!

ALL WE'VE GOT

AFTER THE THEFT,

NO DOUBT,

20

SOUNDS LIKE FUN!

KYAAH HAHAH!

HAHAH...

ヒュ
サワサワサワ
ザワザワ

!!
!?
AH!!
I...I...

OH!!
.....

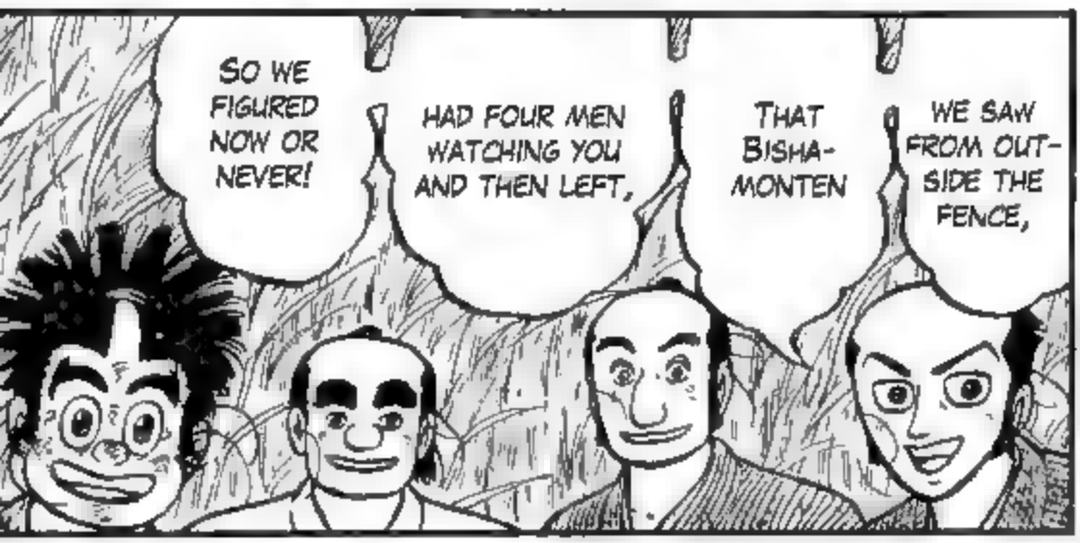
HE MADE ME PASS OUT .

AZUMI-SAN!
AH!

AZUMI-SAN IS AWAKE!

DID YOU ALL SAVE ME?

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

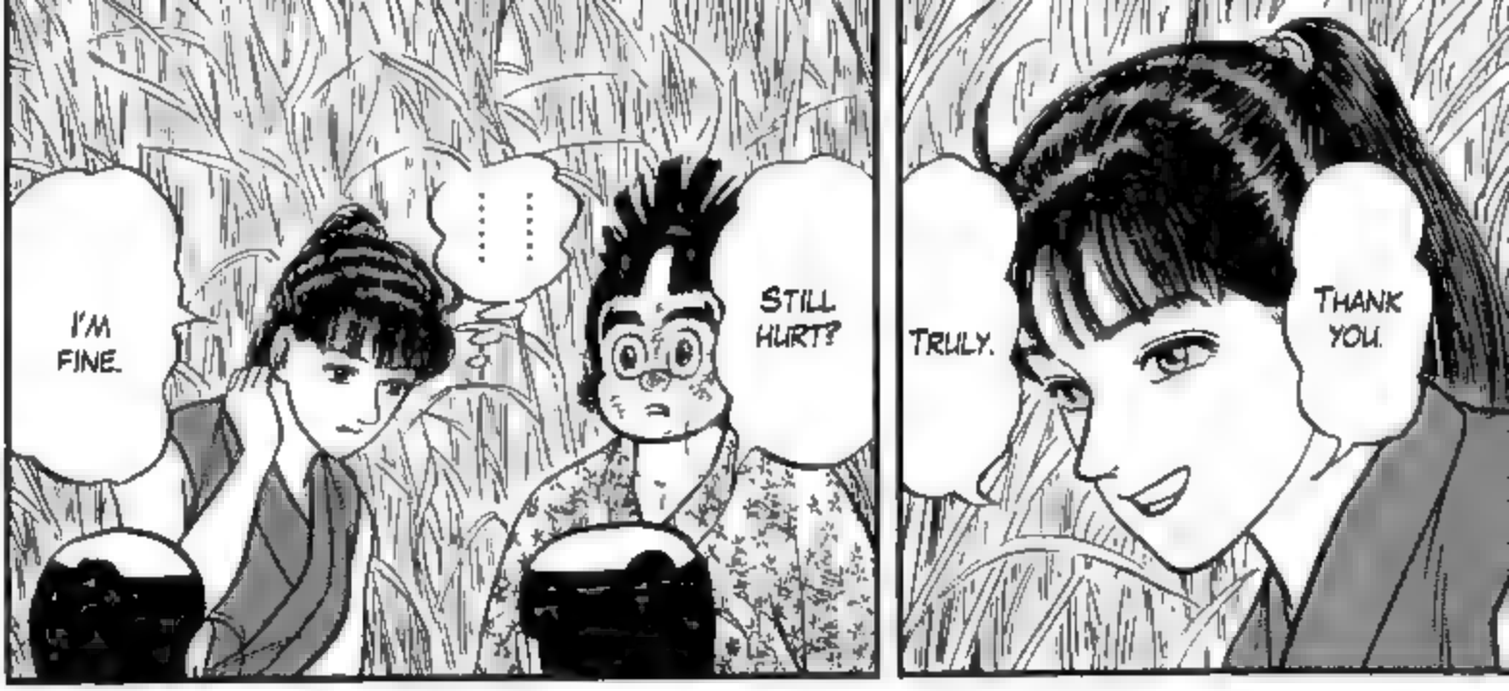

SO WE FIGURED NOW OR NEVER!
HAD FOUR MEN WATCHING YOU AND THEN LEFT,
THAT BISHA-MONTEN
WE SAW FROM OUT-SIDE THE FENCE,

YOU...
EVEN WITH BISHAMON-TEN THERE ...

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU!

WE WERE DESPERATE!
YEAH!
RIGHT?

.....


I'M FINE.
.....
STILL HURT?
TRULY.
THANK YOU.

.....
IT'S TRUE...
AH...
IT'S NOW MORNING...

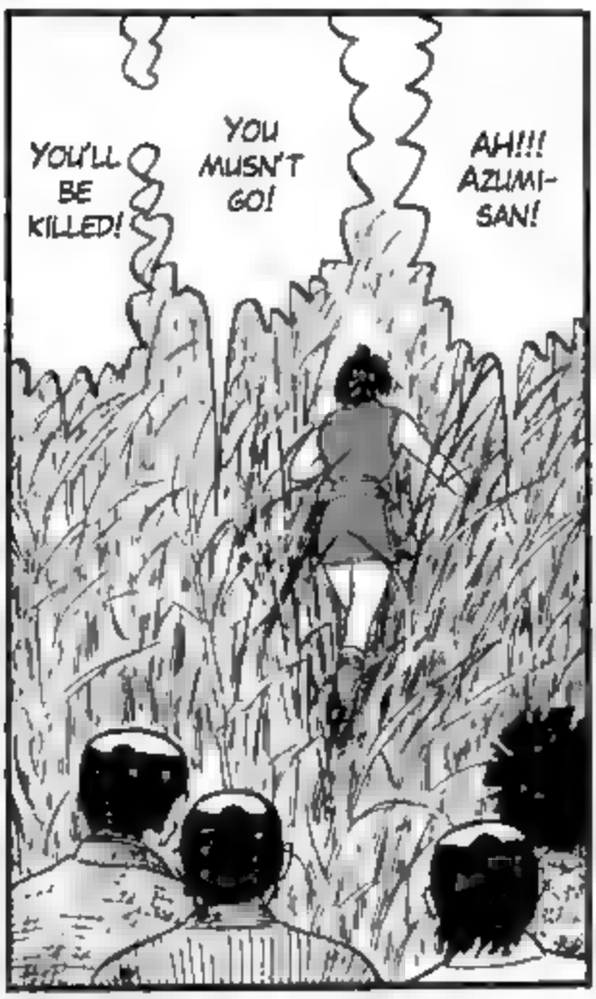
A-ARE YOU GOING TO THE POST-TOWN!?
FELL ASLEEP...
WE ALSO

YOU SHOULD WAIT!
I'M GOING TO WHERE OKO-SAN AND KIKU ARE BEING HELD
TO SAVE THEM.
I'M SURE THEY'LL LEAVE AFTER THAT!
AFTER THEY STEAL THE GOLD, THEY WON'T NEED HOSTAGES ANY MORE!

YOU SHOULD WAIT UNTIL THEN.
YES!
WE'VE ALSO DECIDED TO DO THAT.

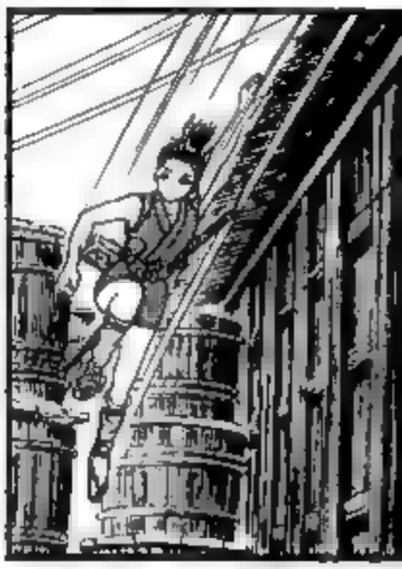
WE...
WE HAVE ALREADY RESIGNED OURSELVES,
TO LOSING OUR PROVINCE!

AH!
WE'VE DECIDED TO.. BEAR IT PATIENTLY!

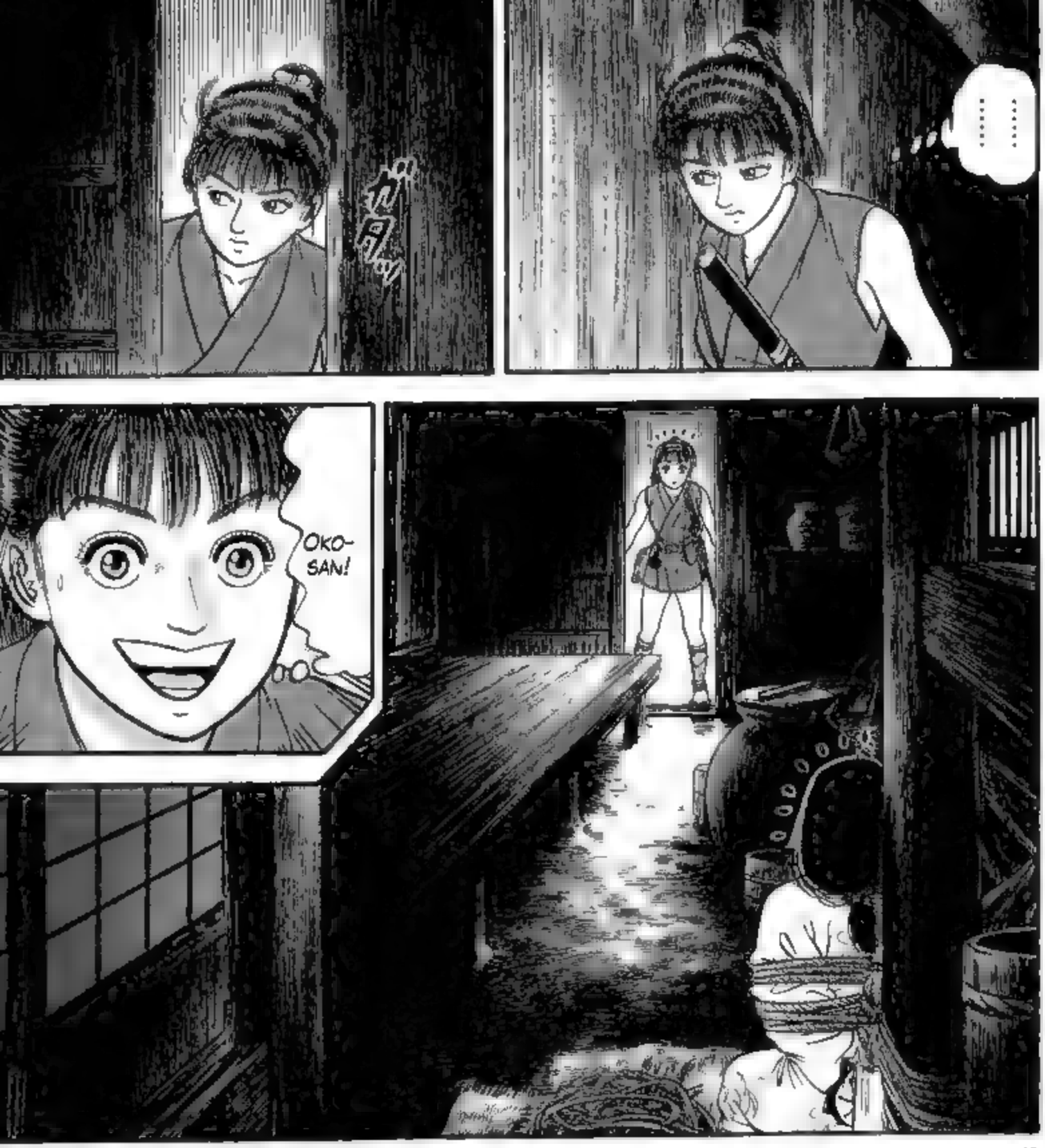

YOU'LL BE KILLED!
YOU MUSN'T GO!
AH!!! AZUMI-SAN!

FOR YOU TO SIT AND WAIT HERE AS YOU SAY.
I THINK IT'D BE BEST...

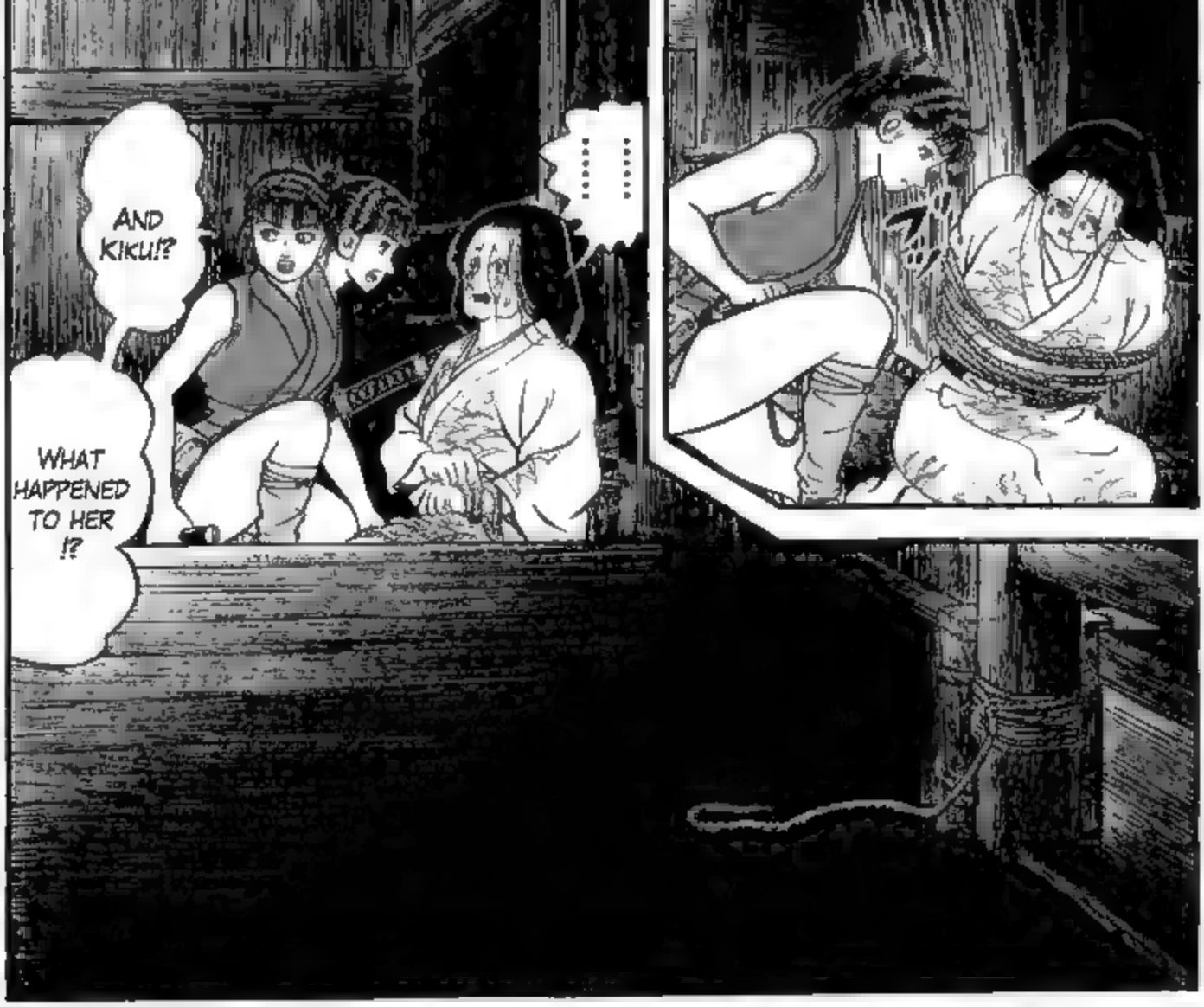
I HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST INTENTION OF MAKING ALL THOSE MEN MY ENEMIES OR FIGHTING THEM THERE!
IT'S FINE! IF IT'S ONLY A RESCUE FOR OKO-SAN AND KIKU, I CAN DO IT ALONE!



TO ATTACK THE PROC-ESSION...?
I WONDER IF THEY'VE ALREADY LEFT...
NOBODY HERE...


ガタッ
……
OKO-SAN!

……
!!……



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CHAPTER 7: KIKU'S TRAGEDY
第七話 きく無残

!!.....
KI...KIKU-SAN WAS CRUELLY TORTURED!!

!!.....
THROWN IN THE BACK!
H-HE WAS...
I'M SO SORRY! I WAS HELPLESS TO DO A THING!

TH-THROWN IN...?

KIKU!!!
.....

HOW MANY BLOWS DID THEY RAIN ON YOUR POOR FACE!?
HOW MONS-TROUS!
KIKU!
WHAT A STATE YOU'RE IN...

KIKU..!

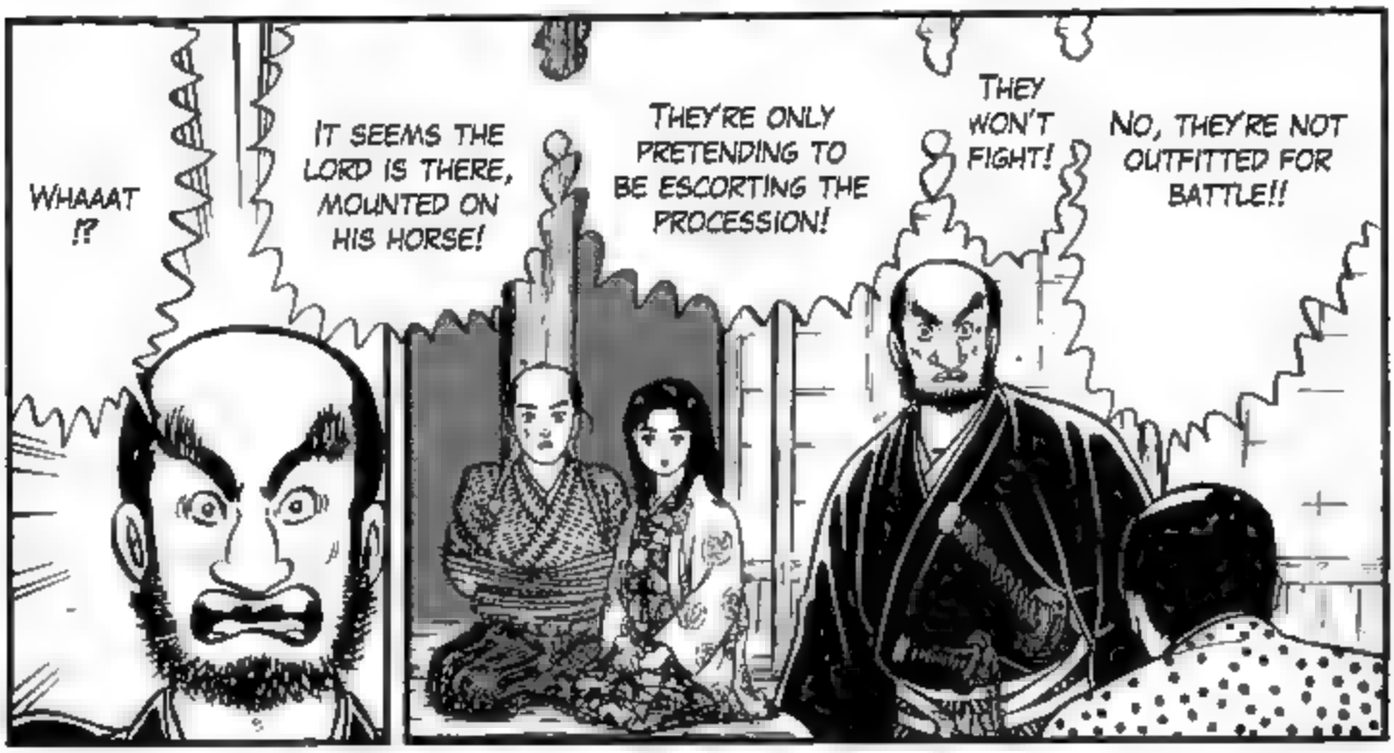
KIKU...
KIKU...
KIKU...

YOU... BASTAAARDS !!!!!!!
TRYING TO RAPE YOU...AS RETALIATION FOR BEING A MAN..JUST FOR FUN...THEY GANGED UP ON YOU...AND BEAT YOU TO DEATH...UNTIL YOU ENDED UP LIKE THAT!?
IT HURT, RIGHT?
IT WAS PAINFUL, RIGHT!?
IT WAS TERRI-FYING, RIGHT!?

IF THEY HAD JUST STAYED PUT AT THE CASTLE...WHILE THE SHOGUNATE GOLD WAS STOLEN...
...IN THE MEAN-WHILE...EVEN THOUGH THE LORD OF THIS DOMAIN AND HIS RETAINERS HAD ALREADY DECIDED NOT TO FIGHT...
THEY'D LACK ANY EXCUSE WITH WHICH TO JUSTIFY THEMSELVES TO THE SHOGUN.

THE RESULT OF THAT DISCUSSION WAS THE DECISION TO MAKE A SHOW THAT THEY WERE ESCORTING THE PROCESSION PASSING THROUGH THE DOMAIN.

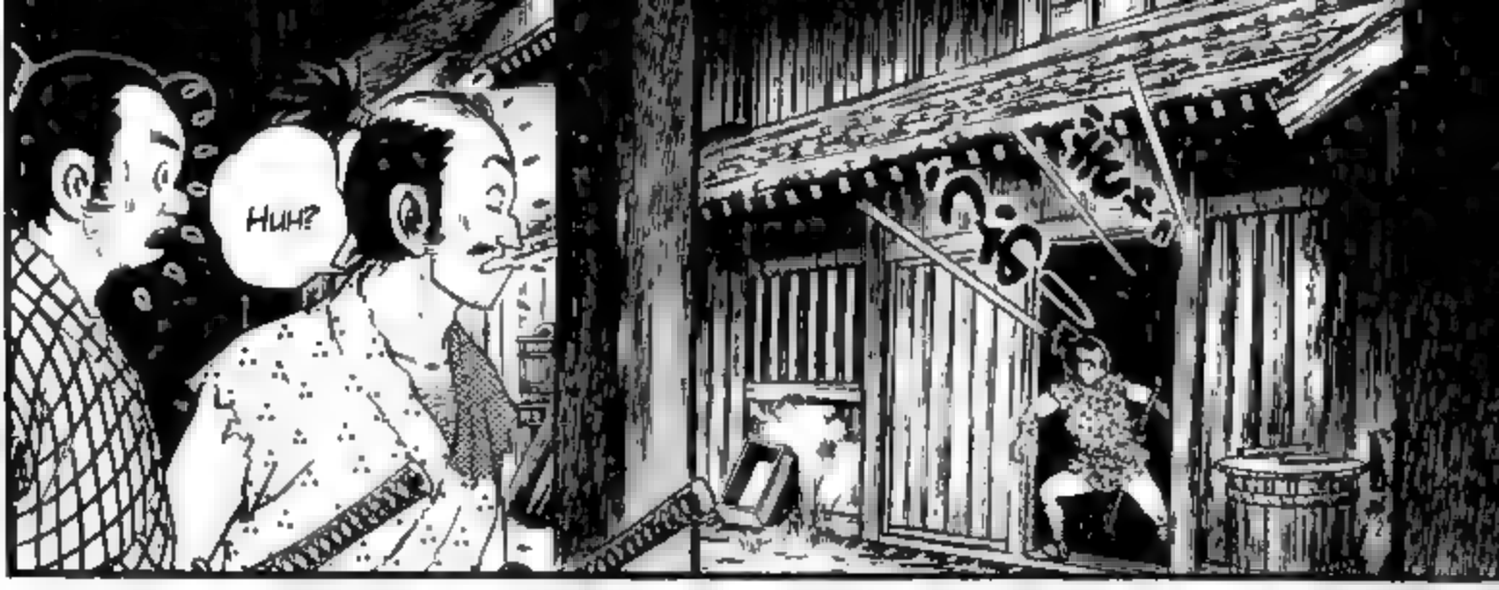
.....
.....
ARE THEY PLANNING SOME FINAL BATTLE!?
WHAT?! ALL OF THEM!?
I WENT TO ASK! THEY ALL LEFT TOGETHER FOR THE POST TOWN!

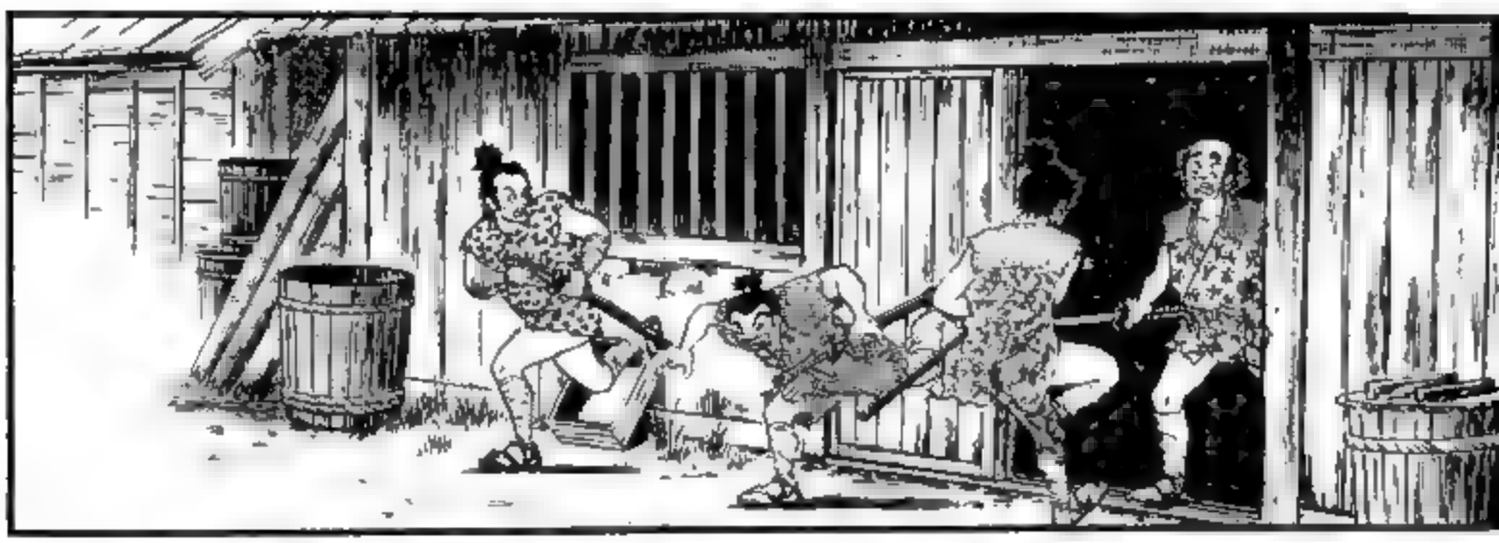

WHAAAT !?
IT SEEMS THE LORD IS THERE, MOUNTED ON HIS HORSE!
THEY'RE ONLY PRETENDING TO BE ESCORTING THE PROCESSION!
THEY WON'T FIGHT!
NO, THEY'RE NOT OUTFITTED FOR BATTLE!!

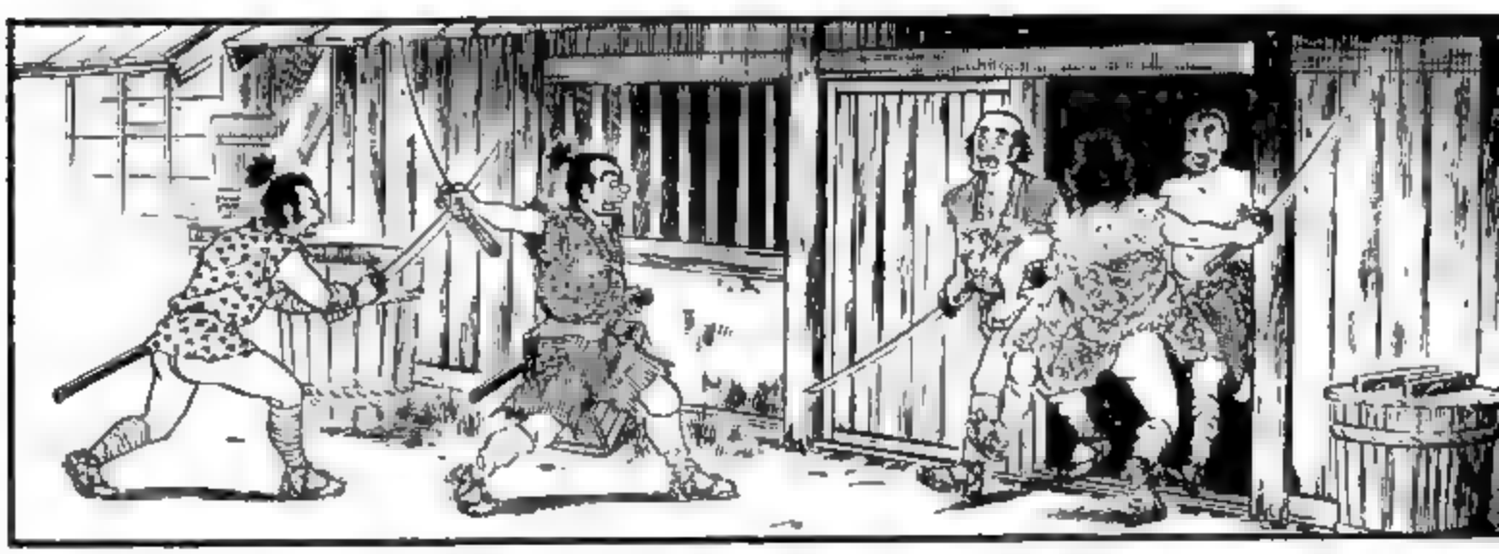
.....
.....
SH-SHINO-SAMA! WHAT DO WE DO!?

YOU'RE DECOYS TO MAKE THEM THINK THERE'S NOTHING OUTTA THE ORDINARY HERE!
HEY! ACT MORE NATURALLY!

HAHA!
SO ACT MORE NATURAL!

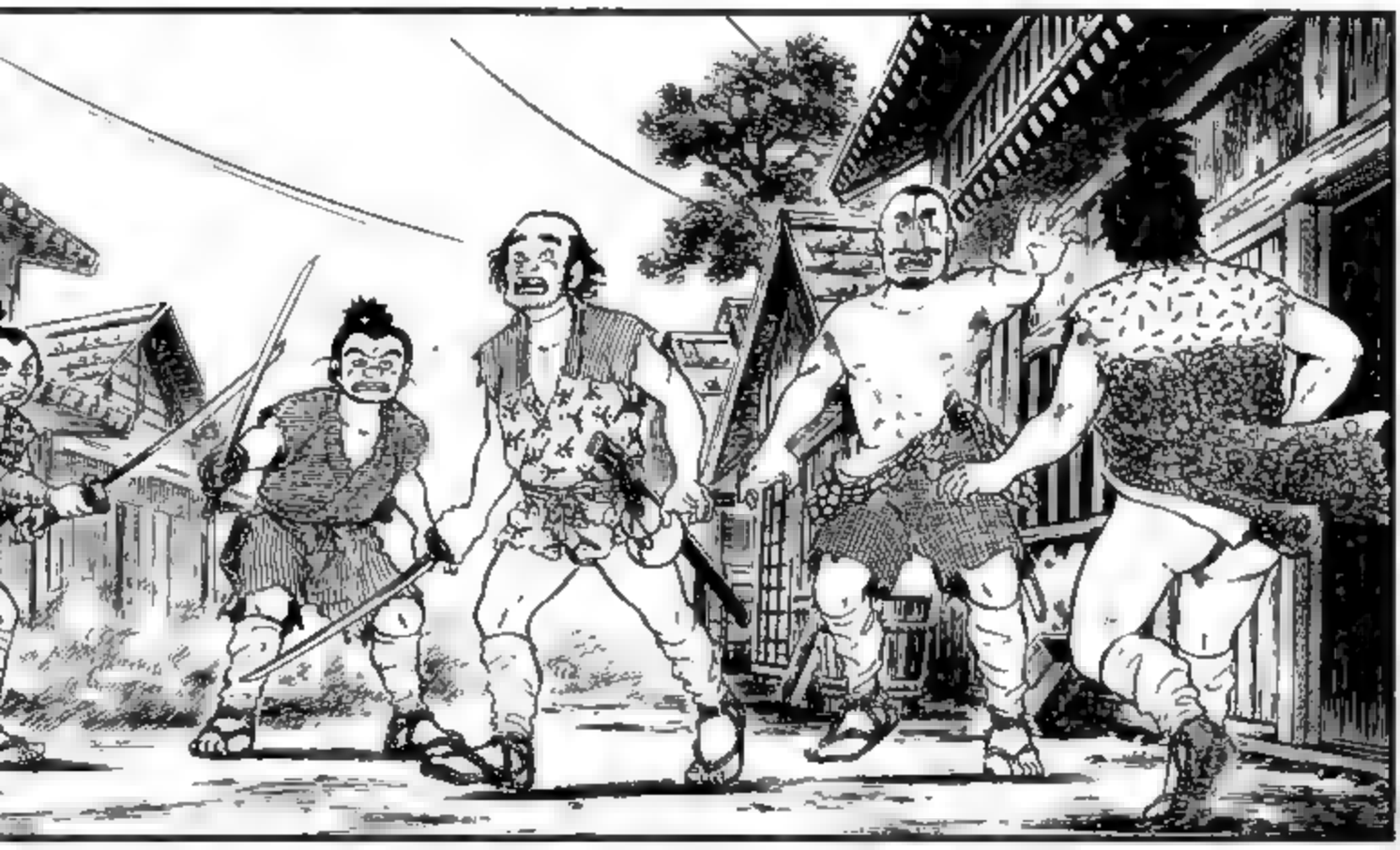

HUH?

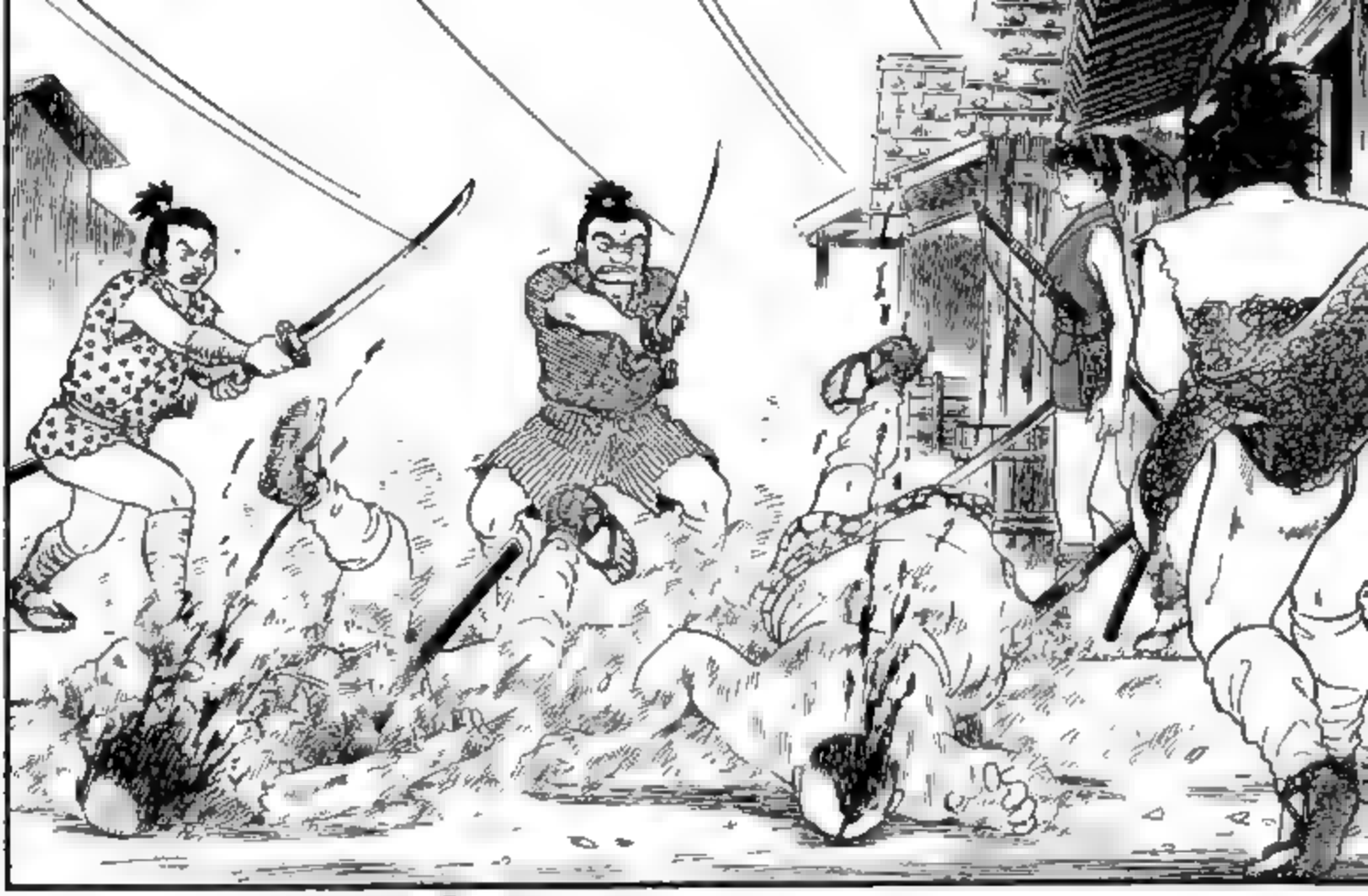




WHAT'S WRONG!?
HEY!

GET BACK IN YOUR POSITION!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING!?



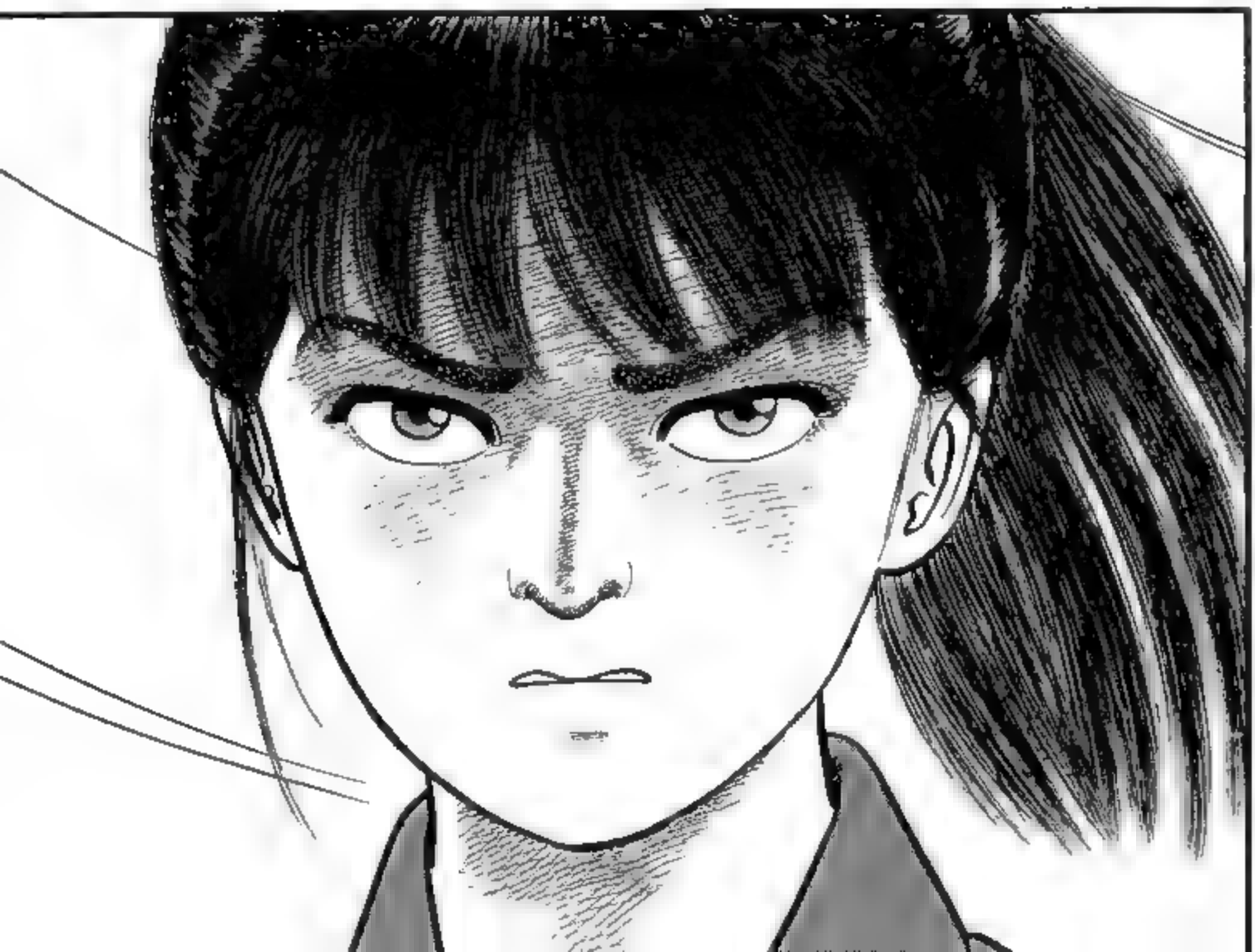


!!
AZUMI!

KILL HEEEEER!
EVERYONE! COME OUT!
E-ENGAGE HER!!!!

KILL HER!!!
IF YOU DON'T, SHE'LL BECOME OUR BIGGEST OBSTACLE FOR THAT GOLD!

KILL THAT WOMAN!!!! NOW!!!!



WHAT THE?!
AAAH!

POOR, SICK KIKU, SUCH CRUEL TREATMENT, I MUST AT THE LEAST END YOUR LIVES...
AFTER YOU GAVE KIKU,
WAS JUST THE MEANS BY WHICH YOU HAD TO SURVIVE. I HAD NO PLANS TO INTERFERE, BUT...
I THOUGHT THAT BRINGING TRAGEDY UPON THE PEOPLE OF THIS DOMAIN...

KILL HER!
SHE'LL RUIN OUR PLAN FOR THE GOLD!
SHE'S A DEADLY WEAPON!!
DID THAT GIRL DO THIS?!

WHAT HAVE YOU DOOOONE !?!?!

I WON'T FORGIVE YOU!

IF WE DON'T KILL HER, WE CAN'T GET THAT GOLD, EITHER!
KILL HER!
WH...WH WHA.. THAT DAMN WOMAN!

AH!?
OH!

ALL ALONE?
IT'S A WOMAN?
THEY'RE... FIGHTING?

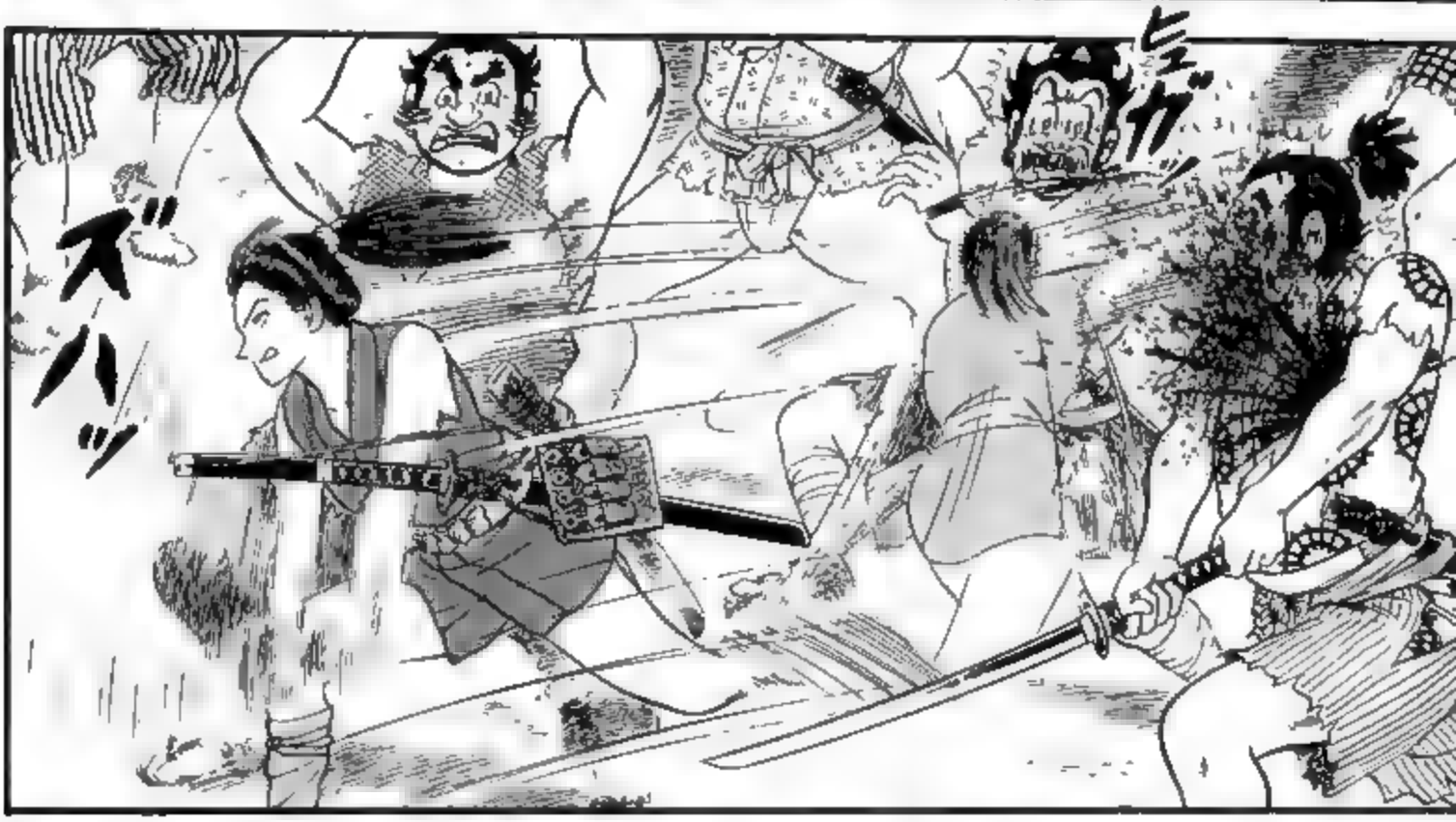
!!
IT'S... AZUMI!!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? CHARGE HER AS ONE!
THE GOLD IS GONNA BE HERE SOON!
YOU DAMN BITCH! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?

EVRYONE GO FOR HER AT THE SAME TIME!

DAMN YOU!!!
SLAY HER!!
YOU WANNA GET IN OUR WAY, YOU DAMN BITCH!?

ガッシッ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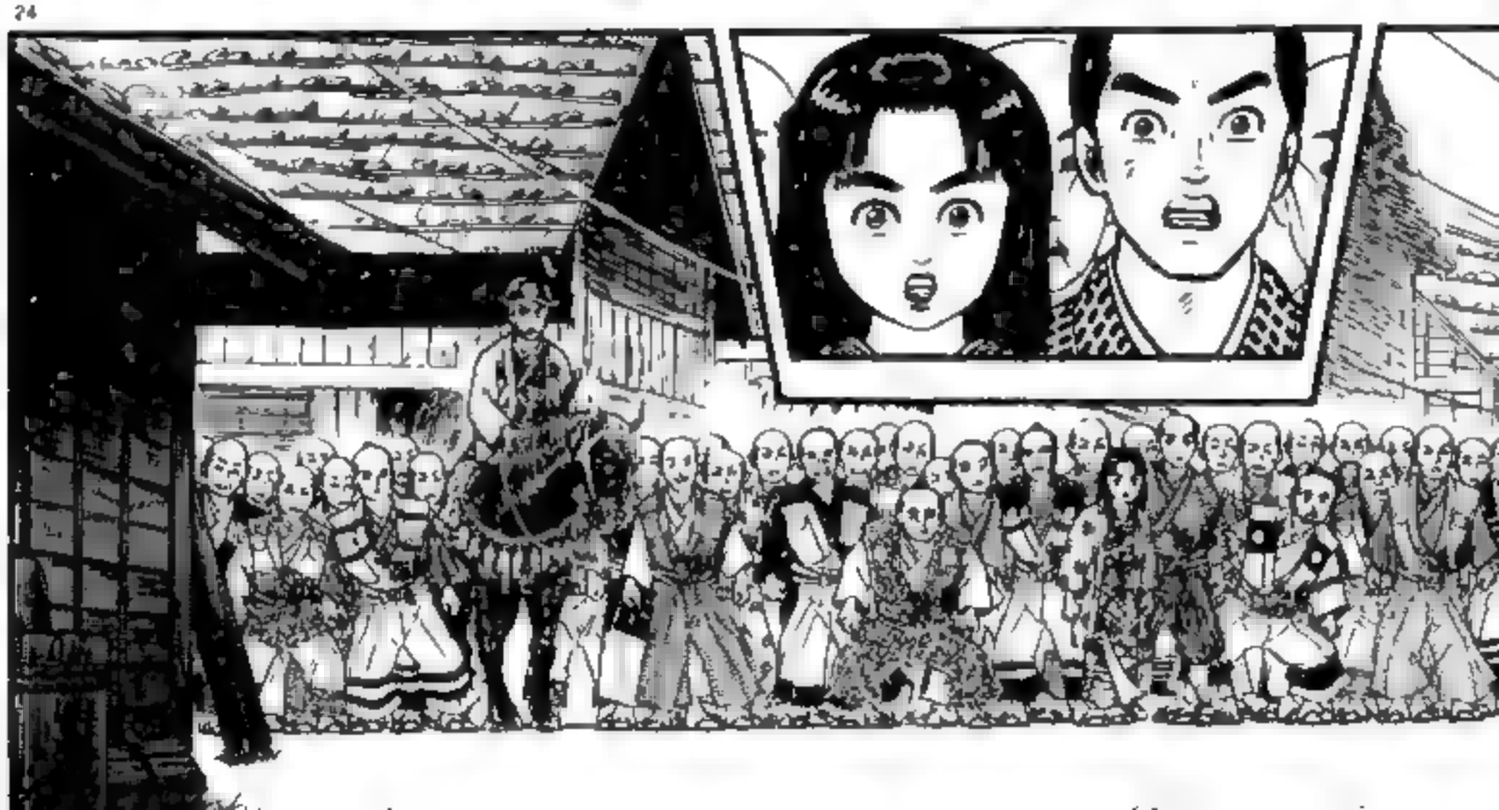

DAMN BITCH!!!
KILL HER!!
DAMN YOU!!

WHAT'S ALL THAT RACKET?

SHE'S ALREADY KILLED A TON OF OUR MEN!
SHE'S SO FREAKISHLY STRONG!!
うみ
SHE CAME TO ATTACK US!!! ON HER OWN!
THAT LITTLE GIRL...

WAIT!

STAY HERE AND USE OUR GUNS TO KILL HER.
SEEMS WE... TOOK HER LIGHTLY.

I'LL RIDDLE HER WITH BULLETS!
BUT WE CAN'T LET HER GET IN THE WAY!
I THOUGHT SHE WAS JUST A CUTE LITTLE GIRL.

LEAVE IT TO ME!
GOT IT!

MY GOD ...
MY..

H-H-H-
HEEEEY!

THE
GOOOLD
!!!!

ズバー!!
ビュビッ
ビッ
BAST-
ARD!!!

DAMMIIIIIT!
ビッ
ビッ

(連載・ビッグコミックスペリオール平成11年2号より8号まで)

「あずみ」 第15集—完—

あずみ15 —きく無残—

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